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Miscellany.

REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

[From the *Revue Encyclopédique*. M. Sismondi's third and last article. For the two first, see above, pp. 1—25.]

WE have endeavoured to show the progress of religious opinions from the beginning of this century, among the people and with the clergy of the Catholic church. It has appeared to us, that on the one hand, a new zeal has animated the faithful and led them to unite in bonds of charity and piety; that on the other hand, the priests, mistaking the fervor which they observed in their flocks, believed the moment favorable for preaching both submission and intolerance; that this contrariety between the spirit of the clergy and that of the people, had arrested the progress of religious opinions and might perhaps compel them to become retrograde.

But in order to judge of the religious movement of this century, it is proper now to turn our attention to the Protestant church, which is agitated in its turn by a similar fermentation. There, too, we shall find a great increase of fervor in the people, and an effort among the heads of certain churches to gain from this fervor, submission of conscience and intolerance of dissenting opinions. Meanwhile, the Protestant clergy, constituted in a very different manner from the Catholic, for the most part enter very little into this contest; and the principles of the reformation being diametrically opposed to intolerance and the subjection of reason, those who dogmatise in this church, far from producing unity by their labors, only multiply dissenting

opinions, and thus render more necessary that mutual toleration against which they contend.

The Protestants have not always well understood their own system. They have not always felt that the independence of individual opinions, was the essence of their church. They have not always given up the hope of a uniformity of faith, and they have sometimes appeared embarrassed, when reproached with the inconsistency and number of dissenting opinions found among them. Even to the present time, one half of the Protestants, persisting in the same error, contend for unity of doctrines, though with little chance of obtaining it, since each one seeks this unity in a different system.

We ought not to be astonished at this proneness in every man who thinks and reflects, to subject all others to his own opinion. It is the inevitable result of our faculties. The resistance of others to that which seems to us to be evidence, shocks us. At first it appears to be stupidity, then obstinacy and insincerity. Besides, as opinions which affect the interests of this world are the motives of our actions, when those of the men around us are in opposition to our own, they alarm us. We expect that the application of their principles will disturb our interests, and endanger or destroy what is most dear to us. The republican would destroy the monarchy to which we are sincerely attached, or the royalist would destroy republican institutions. Opinions leading naturally to actions which would change the very essence of that to which they relate, ought certainly to be reputed dangerous.

Religious opinions have not the same consequences. Man can never change by his belief that which exists eternally. But however obvious this difference, it has perhaps never been remarked. The world of spirits is more independent of us than the arch of the heavens, which we may measure, but cannot act upon. Let an astronomer adopt the system of Copernicus, or that of Ptolemy, he will not change the real movement of the heavenly bodies. Let a blind man deny the existence of the sun, he will not extinguish its light. Still less can our feeble thoughts and feeble words change the essence of God.

There is undoubtedly in religions something besides those doctrines, on the reality of which our faith can have no influence. There are moral precepts, more or less pure or corrupt, which, by giving a right or wrong direction to our actions, may most seriously affect our interests. Those precepts may give occa-

sion to the gravest controversies ; but it is not upon them that sects have divided. They have frequently calumniated each other as to their moral conduct ; but anathemas have never been hurled at their maxims of morality, precisely because these can only be discussed and judged by the aid of reason. In the preaching of a new faith, there may be something to endanger the credit, the riches, the power of the priests of the old faith. They may be alarmed about their temporal interests ; but then they must not tell us that they defend God, that they avenge God, when they think only of themselves. Those articles of faith that have given birth to controversies, turn wholly on the mysteries of religion ; they have no influence on the essence of things ; they do not endanger God ; they cannot offend Him.

These controverted points are as inscrutable to us, as they are inoffensive to God. The fundamental notions about the Divinity, those on which the religions of all civilized nations agree, such as his omnipresence, his omnipotence, his omniscience, so far exceed the measure of our ideas, that we have only confused and contradictory conceptions about them, which we constantly deny in our language ; as, for example, when we place God in heaven. Nothing is more evident than that our desire of knowledge leads us incessantly to the scrutiny of this great mystery of the universe. But as soon as we compare the immensity of the subject with the weakness of our intellect, we ought to be sensible that each man must form a different idea, proportioned to his faculties and varying according to their measure ; that though he may repeat the same words to express this mystery, still he will mentally explain these words in a different manner.

The christian revelation, in teaching men what they ought to do to render themselves worthy of God, has refrained from explaining to them what they could not comprehend about the nature of God and his relations to man. But Christians are not contented with this silence. From the earliest ages they have raised their eyes to the world of spirits to explain it, and they have proclaimed dogmas, according as they have interpreted scripture more or less subtly. The Catholic church makes her excellence consist in the uniformity she maintains in the inculcation of these dogmas. Her experience during eighteen centuries, ought, however, to have convinced men of the impossibility of making them think and believe alike upon a subject so very far above their thoughts. She has maintained the uni-

formity of her doctrines only by casting from her bosom, when she was weak or indulgent, all those who departed from her rule of faith, and punishing them even to death, when she was strong or cruel. It is from the midst of the Catholic church that all heresies have sprung, and they may be counted by thousands. She has not, then, preserved her children from those diversities of faith with which she reproaches other churches. She has only disowned them when they used their faculties to examine her dogmas.

Jesus Christ spoke to men with divine authority; but men were curious to know who Jesus Christ himself was, and how it was that his authority was identified with that of the Divinity. Hundreds of hypotheses were offered by very ingenious men, who all rested on the scriptures, which each one interpreted in his own way;—who were all, probably, sincere, since they courageously endured persecutions and punishments for their opinions. All called themselves Catholics; all were so in effect, till the moment when the temporal authority, which had fluctuated between these opposite opinions, decided for one of them, and persecuted the rest. But after the divine nature of Christ had been proclaimed by the conquering party, questions more and more abstruse, presented themselves to the Catholic doctors; such as the union of the divine with the human nature, the union of two wills in the same being. Every doubt divided the church. Every decision rejected from her bosom a portion of the faithful. This continual rise of new heresies, which was nothing but the successive examination, by Catholic doctors, of all the superhuman questions on which the subtilty of the mind could be exercised, continued till the last century and the birth of Jansenism. But the sects which have been one after another thrown out of the Catholic church, and outlawed both by the civilized world and the temporal power, have nearly all perished, except the reformers, who, in the sixteenth century, found civilized temporal power to protect them, and the Jansenists, who, though condemned by the church and without temporal protection, could not, on account of the change of our manners, be destroyed by fire and sword.

Habit arrests and enchains the boldest minds. The reformers, after having raised a controversy about a particular dogma, rightly refused to submit to the authority of the church that condemned them, as had been refused by all other sectaries, perhaps without exception, who, born in the bosom of the Catholic

church, had been successively rejected by her. But the reformers remained as stedfastly attached to uniformity of faith as ever. They still revered every judgment the church had passed on those points which they themselves did not controvert. They still repeated all the anathemas pronounced by the Catholics against the opinions formerly discussed in that church, and it was by a fatal consequence of the prejudices in which he had been brought up, and of which but the smallest part had been dissipated, that Calvin caused Servetus to be burnt.

But the reformers were obliged, as all controvertists should be, to appeal from the authority of the church to private judgment; and from the examination, to which each of their disciples devoted himself, and which has been prolonged for three centuries, another reform has proceeded, far more important than that which they fancied they had accomplished. The first reformers wished that every one should see for himself, and judge for himself, but at the same time believe with them. They pretended to the right of guarding the purity of the faith, of excluding or punishing dissenters, of preparing confessions of faith, which they caused all members of the clergy to sign, and of inserting in them anathemas against those who did not think as they did. The reformed, called to judge for themselves, reviewed all those doctrines which the successive condemnation of heresies had incorporated into orthodoxy, and they divided on each particular. There were really then as many modifications of belief as there were individuals. It has been often said that it is impossible to find two leaves precisely alike on the same tree. Can it be imagined then, that there should be found two souls exactly similar in the whole race of men? Yet it is with all our soul that we form our faith; our intelligence, our imagination, our sensibility, our memory, are all in requisition. There is not one of these faculties that does not modify, in its own way, the objects perceived by it.

The toleration of dissenting opinions, the inevitable consequence of the right of examination, was tacitly established in all Protestant churches during the last century. In England, where the clergy formed a most powerful body, invested with great political prerogatives, and retaining an organization nearly the same as that of the Catholic clergy, the English church evinced the greatest fondness for her confessions of faith, and thus forced all dissenters to separate and form as many little independent churches as they discovered modifications of belief. But the liberty guaranteed to the English by

their laws allowing them to discuss their opinions publicly, every dispute gave rise to new divergencies even in the bosom of the minor churches, and opinions were thus even far more multiplied than sects. Thus some of the members of the English church, which alone had a fixed liturgy, began to refuse subscription to the confession of thirtynine articles, and others to retrench from the liturgy, the creed of Athanasius, and that of the Nicene fathers, or those phrases of the litany which were opposed to their personal opinions.

On the continent, the liberty of examination was exercised in the bosom of the reformed church without causing schism. It there seems to have been understood, very early, that religion did not consist in divining the secrets of the universe. The Genevan church, from the year 1705, put an end to the custom of making all their clergy sign the same confession of faith. From the moment that anathemas were no longer pronounced against certain opinions, the professors of them ceased to maintain them with violence, were gently withdrawn from the dominion of faith into that of philosophy, and, though each man fancied he modified his opinions in conformity with his own inclinations, so far from new sects springing up, the three churches of the first reformers, Luther, Zuingli, and Calvin, tended, rapidly, to melt into one.

Affairs were in this position when the French revolution astonished and shook all Christendom. The revolution, under a religious point of view, was absolutely foreign to Protestantism. Directed against the priesthood, it appeared most violent where the yoke of the priesthood was most galling. In destroying abuses, it persecuted individuals; it attacked religion itself, and denied every belief most consolatory to man. But at the height of its violence, in spite of the support that government and arms gave to its maxims, it made no progress among the Protestants. In Switzerland, Holland, and Germany, religious worship was never suspended, even in the presence of the French armies; the pastors had lost nothing of their credit, and the number of unbelievers, always very small in this communion, was not augmented.

Nevertheless, the attacks of the French terrorists upon the fundamental principles of all religion, had scandalized the Protestants as well as the Catholics. They [the Protestants] reanimated the zeal and excited the reaction of which we are now experiencing the effects. It was faith which the revolutionists

attacked, and they separated it from moral precepts. It was faith for which the new preachers of Christianity declared, and, in order to distinguish themselves from the revolutionists, they raised it above moral precepts, and professed, with redoubled zeal, the doctrine, that it is faith which saves ; that it is in purity of faith that Christianity wholly consists.

It now became difficult to decide what the faith of the Protestant church was. Every theologian, often every single believer, had considered questions of doctrine under a particular point of view. Controversy had ceased, but religious instruction and preaching had continued to develop independent opinions. To present the faith of Protestants as one body of doctrine, it would be necessary to resume all the questions controverted in the Romish church, from the first heresy she had condemned to the last. It would be necessary to represent, by intelligible words, such as could bear examination and discussion, all those mysteries, which for a century have been permitted to repose in obscurity, and which have never been found necessary to sustain the piety of the faithful. The zeal of those who wish thus to reform, or rather to make reform recede, shows itself eager for sacrifices. The Protestant church, not admitting the practices designed to mortify the flesh, mortified the spirit. They thought to render themselves most acceptable to God by adopting the faith most revolting to their reason. At the same time, they permitted themselves to be guided by the confessions of faith adopted by the first reformers ; they resumed them in all their force, and, eagerly submitting themselves to authority, those very persons who neither recognise that of popes, nor of councils, regarded that of Calvin and his first disciples as decisive.

From the epoch at which Voltaire's writings were in greatest vogue, we have seen springing up among the Protestants, and multiplying during the storms of the revolution, new teachers, who, offering themselves as defenders of the faith, demanded of their hearers the most absolute submission of their consciences, and the renunciation of their reason. Some formed alliance with theologians, who were born Catholics, but who tacitly separated themselves from their church ; these were the Martinists, who fancied they had reopened a mysterious communication between superior spirits and men, and the Quietists, disciples of Fenelon and Madame Guyon, who almost worshipped the memory of the latter. They multiplied in Switzerland, before the

peace, so as to form a very active and quite numerous congregation. Others attached themselves to the obscure reveries of the old German enthusiasts, such as Jacob Boehmen and Swedenborg, and commented on them as a second revelation. The subtle metaphysics which at the same time had taken possession of the German schools, contributed to diffuse this cloudy mysticism throughout Protestant Germany. Others, in fine, struggled to lead back the reform to the doctrines of Calvin. They attached themselves above all to his profession of faith concerning the union of two natures in Christ, the efficacy of his sacrifice, and the doctrine of grace. These doctrines prevailed most in England, and imparted new ardor to the sect of the Methodists.

The doctrines of the new apostles who were endeavouring to convert those Protestants whom they called lukewarm, were, then, by no means identical. But all were governed by the same principle ; to believe much and examine little. When they met together, the English leaders had a great advantage over the others, from a habit, acquired in a free country, of acting in concert, and of forming rich and well organized associations to direct their efforts. The Bible Society, though formed among Christians of every faith, very soon fell under their influence and seconded them powerfully. Other societies were formed to send missions to Protestant countries. Subscriptions were filled with a profusion rarely seen except in England. Preachers favorable to the new opinions were richly paid, and charged with the distribution of abundant charities to the poor, who entrusted them with the care of their souls. Sectarian books were gratuitously distributed wherever they would be received. In England, where the right of naming pastors is a venal property, all the presentations to livings which could be purchased, were bought by the methodists ; and it is easy to perceive what a prodigious influence money might exercise on public opinion, without the supposition that the converts sold their consciences.

Protestant missionaries labor at the present time in France and throughout Europe, side by side with Catholic missionaries. They do not aim at the same object ; they have not a powerful and organized church ; they have not a political design ; neither do they dream of combining in their own hands all the powers of society. The majority of them do not even belong to the clergy ; they are men of the world, men of letters, oftentimes women, who labor to disseminate their opinions with all the

fervor of new converts. But these opinions are not on this account the less exclusive. They arrogate no less than the Jesuits, the right to prescribe to men what they ought to believe. They demand no less than they, the sacrifice of human reason to divine faith; and, as they have no power, as they cannot claim to have been religious instructors for centuries, and as they do not affect to be inspired, their pretensions are perhaps on that account the more offensive to those whom they would indoctrinate.

In truth, it is difficult to explain the presumption of these prophets, self appointed to their mission. Many among them are upon every other subject modest and doubting; they respect the science and philosophy of men whose faith, from their high exaltation, they condemn. But what is their light; what are their titles; what proofs have they given of the superiority of their understandings? Certainly no human knowledge can enable us to comprehend the Divinity or his relations to man; yet, if they are Protestants, they must seek for truth in the holy scriptures alone. Can they reply that they understand better than others these scriptures, which are appealed to by thousands of sects, and always accommodated to the particular interpretation of each? Have they studied them in their original languages? Do they know the history of their variations, of the passages suspected of interpolation, of the different interpretations that have been given to them? Have they compared the different versions? Have they taken each heresy at its birth, examined the controversy to which it gave rise, and judged anew the question on which other churches than their own have passed judgment? They will not reply, but we will boldly answer for them, that they have done nothing of all this; for those who have devoted most time and care to such studies, have only demonstrated thereby, and sometimes even against their own feelings, that these high questions must remain undecided.

It is well known that a German baroness, who has placed herself at the head of the most enthusiastic of the evangelical sects, and who has exercised a remarkable influence over men of power and even over sovereigns, imagines herself endowed with supernatural powers; that she claims to have seen apparitions, and to have had revelations, and that it is in virtue of these reveries of a disordered brain that she demands faith in her words. But Madame de Krudner was probably sincere in this illusion. He who fosters these ecstasies is soon transported

into an imaginary world where he loses the faculty of distinguishing the visions of this kind of fever, from those which are transmitted by his eyes. In admitting this first deception of which she was herself the dupe, the conduct of Madame de Krudner has been far more honest, far more modest than that of many great ladies, who do not believe themselves inspired, and who nevertheless preach, and decide upon, and condemn opinions, which it does not belong to man to fathom.

In the midst of this new fermentation of religious ideas, the Protestant clergy have in general conducted themselves with much wisdom and prudence. They have abstained, as far as they were able, from declaring themselves in the controversies, and they have given an example of toleration and mutual support. The English clergy, it is true, are more attached than all others to orthodoxy and confessions of faith; yet they could not avoid dividing themselves among the dissenting opinions. It is observable that the curates manifest a great repugnance to permit the ecclesiastics, their brethren and neighbours, to preach in their pulpits; fearing, say they, that they might turn their parishioners from the pure doctrines they teach them; as if they could perceive by any sign, that their doctrine is more pure than their brethren's. At the same time, the heads of the clergy look with an evil eye on this new impulse given to religious zeal by others than ecclesiastics. They are alarmed at this usurpation of their attributes, and the archbishop of Canterbury has recently manifested his opposition to Bible Societies, and is seconded in this step by the most ardent champions of the English church.

In the Protestant churches of Germany, the philosophical spirit of distinguished biblical critics has appeared in opposition to the enthusiastic spirit of some new schools; but their controversy itself attests the freedom and division of opinions. The evangelical churches of the countries of the Rhine, have resolved, by their act of union, to take the holy scriptures as the only basis of theological instruction, thus setting aside every creed; and this resolution was confirmed, after a new deliberation, in the month of November, 1825, by the third general synod of the Rhinobavarian Protestant church. In Switzerland, the clergy began by showing a bitter zeal for orthodoxy; but, soon finding themselves surpassed by the new-lights who pretended to be more orthodox than they, and feeling themselves soured by controversy, which is irritating in proportion to its unreasonableness, they lost discretion and support, and provoked a resolu-

tion of the state council of the Canton de Vaud, of the fifteenth of January, 1824, against the evangelical Christians, designated in this resolution by the name of *momiers*, which cannot but be a source of regret to the friends of religious liberty.

In fine, the Genevan church has at the same time given a noble example of respect for every religious opinion, and efforts to establish concord among Christians of every denomination. It has been warmly attacked; but that it might not envenom disputes, it has abstained from defending itself. It has regarded every belief, when sincerely embraced, as deserving respect. It has imparted to its pastors a sentiment of charity, humility, and peace, which makes them avoid in their pulpits all controversy with the Catholic church, every word of condemnation, all anathemas, every accusation of heresy that might interrupt the edification of their hearers of whatever faith. It has, in like manner, by its regulation of the third of May, 1817, interdicted its members from discussing in the pulpits of the canton, those questions which are the present subjects of controversy in the bosom of the Protestant church;—that is to say, those which relate to the two natures of Jesus Christ, to original sin, to grace and predestination; but without in any way interfering with their opinions or their right to develop them in their writings.*

At the same time that the Genevan Company of Pastors thus unite in their practice the most perfect toleration with a charitable attention to the suppression of controversies, that they may not disturb the edification of believers, several of its members have published, with at least the tacit consent of the body, writings that may be received as the true profession of the faith of the reformation, the only one that accords with that liberty of examination which constitutes the essence of the Protestant church, and that independence of individual belief which is its necessary consequence.

From among these writings, which all deserve the serious attention of the religious philosopher, we confine ourselves to the most recent,† as containing a young minister's representation of what is actually taught in the theological school at Geneva. M.

[* Our readers will find much light thrown upon this part of M. Sismondi's subject, by the article on Geneva in the last number of the *Christian Examiner*.]

† On the Use of Confessions of Faith in Reformed Communion. By Etienne CHASTEL. Geneva, 1823.

Chastel begins by maintaining, 'that the doctrines of Christianity may be divided into two classes. The first are received anterior to the interpretation of the gospel, and without them there is no Christianity. These are the doctrines of the existence of God, of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and of the inspiration of the sacred writers. We shall call them *primitive*. The second are derived from some determinate interpretation of the gospel after it has been accepted as the rule of faith.—We shall call these the doctrines of interpretation.

'On the primitive doctrines, all Christians are agreed; for they would cease to call themselves Christians if they denied God, Jesus Christ, or the sacred scriptures. On the doctrines of interpretation the Catholics are equally agreed, because they attribute to their church infallibility and the right of determining the true sense of scripture. But the reformers, in separating themselves from the Romish church, have adopted the following principles; that the word of God is the only rule of our faith; that no one on earth being infallible, no one has a right to impose a determinate interpretation upon scripture, but that every Christian is free to adopt that which may appear to him best. In virtue of these principles, and interpreting scripture each in his own way, they will extract from it different articles of faith. They will agree on the primitive doctrines and differ on those of interpretation.*

The author passes from these principles to the history of confessions of faith. He shows that they did not become obligatory till the third century of Christianity; that so far from establishing unity of faith, they have produced discussion and division on questions least possible to be solved; that they have multiplied heresies; that, in fine, they are not less opposed to christian charity than to the right of private judgment, the basis of the reformation. He goes farther. He would banish uniformity of instruction in seminaries, in order that he who proposes to instruct others, may himself become acquainted with every faith, and be better qualified to choose the best.†

'A Christian,' says he, 'convinced that he is liable to error, will never force his sentiments on others; above all, if he imagines that salvation depends on faith. He would fear, it seems to me, that he might be the cause of their eternal damnation. He will be reluctant to repel from his communion men

* On the Use of Confessions of Faith, p. 2.

† Ibid. p. 52.

who may, as he himself confesses, think more justly than he does; men whom perhaps Jesus prefers to him. He will always respect the sentiments of his brethren; he will never treat them as heretics, he will never hate them, never reject them for their faith.*

Never was an appeal made to religious men in a spirit of more excellent christian charity, or greater reciprocal toleration. The Genevan clergy address themselves to all who believe in God. 'We refuse,' say they, 'to recognise for Christians those only who themselves refuse to take the title. If you acknowledge Christ and the scriptures, we acknowledge you for Christians and brethren. We do not require of you to renounce a particle of your faith or doctrines, but only not to impose them on us.'

The fermentation which we have observed in various parts of the Protestant church, the zeal for proselytism which animates the new leaders, certainly do not accord with these pacific invitations. Yet, by a different path, these missionaries will arrive at the same end. Many errors, many fantastical doctrines are taught us with a confidence that seems to declare to us, that those who wish to command our faith, secretly believe they are inspired of God. But, as all have acquired a right to speak, as they contradict one another, as they are obliged to enforce conviction with arguments, not punishments, discussion is maintained on all topics. Historical criticism is better studied, and gains in profoundness and extent. Sects divide, individual opinions are constantly becoming more independent, and very soon every one must respect the sincerity of his opponent, and acknowledge the impossibility of proving to men that which is beyond their comprehension.

In the same production, the Genevan church offers to the Catholics themselves, a friendly hand. It is thus it ends. 'All Protestants, whatever may be their mode of interpreting the holy scriptures, should consider themselves as members of the same christian church; banish from among them anathemas, schisms, disputes; regard and cherish one another as all brethren in Christ. As to the Catholics, if we repel them from our communion, it is neither for their dogmas, nor their rites. It is for the spirit of intolerance which their church professes; it is for their submission to human authority; it is because they

* On the Use of Confessions of Faith, p. 81.

serve two masters, and we can serve but one. For the rest, we profess for them the most perfect toleration, the sincerest charity, the most lively desire to see ourselves, at some future day, so reunited to them that there may be, according to the views of our Saviour, but 'one flock and one shepherd.'*

Thus, there are no more reproaches of error or idolatry which the one class of Christians can utter against the other. There is even no more accusation of error; for the Protestant church acknowledges she may herself be deceived. It is liberty of thought alone that she strives for, since the Catholic has renounced it for herself. An abyss, formerly separated the two communions; but now there is only a boundary line between them; and we think we may augur, from this review of religious opinions in the two divisions of the church, that this boundary line itself will not long be regarded as dividing the heritage of brethren at variance.

ON A REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN EXAMINER.

SIR,

I wish to offer some thoughts to your readers on the subject of a regular attendance at Church, and to discuss some of the objections that are commonly made to this duty.

The propriety and expediency of public worship, I shall take for granted. I shall say nothing of the abstract fitness of devoutly contemplating, reverencing, and loving our Maker, which is worship; or, of the evident propriety of making this a social service, of rendering united gratitude for blessings experienced alike by all, and a common adoration to the universal Father. I need not speak of the manifest advantages of public worship; intellectual, social, religious advantages;—of its intellectual advantages; its tendency, when rightly conducted, to improve the mind of the community; its being but a higher school for intellectual culture, and its needful power to counteract the narrowing and depressing influences of business and labor;—of its tendency, again, to improve the social character, by the opportunities of mutual acquaintance, which it furnishes, at least

* 'On the Use of Confessions of Faith, p. 106.

by marking out and familiarizing each other's countenances and making us known to each other ; by its lessening the power also of adventitious distinctions, and causing men to feel that their great interests are common ;—of the tendency of public worship, in fine, and above all, to keep alive the sentiments of religion ; to revive, and quicken, and exalt the emotions of piety ; to strengthen the feeble in virtue ; to raise up them that are bowed down with affliction ; to soften the obdurate and reclaim the wandering, and to prepare men for their great and spiritual destination. The justness of these views of public worship, I suppose, will not be questioned among us, since it is from some or all of these views, that we pay any regard to the institution.

I shall therefore proceed, at once, to consider the principles and the rules, by which we should regulate the degree of our attention to it.

The duty of a regular attendance at church, has been commonly urged upon us from the *pulpit*, and I desire it to be remembered, in the first place, that this circumstance has been decidedly unfavorable to the influence of the argument. It has always been felt that the preacher had personal and peculiar reasons for urging this duty ; that it was therefore not so much a general interest which was involved, as his own particular interest, and that his concern in the subject was not likely to be the most spiritual and pure. It has seemed, perhaps, as if his pride was enlisted in the matter more than his benevolence ; and it has appeared quite natural, indeed, that after having labored all the week to prepare for the sabbath, and after having found, during one part or other of the day, or during any little inclemency of the weather, many vacant seats at church, for which neither the thinness of the parish, nor the sickness of its members would account—it has appeared quite natural, I say, that the feelings of the preacher should be tried in such a case ; that he should even be depressed or mortified by it. And the suspicion has therefore very naturally grown up, that he was in danger of not making the proper allowances ; that his views and representations were liable to be not quite reasonable, moderate, and fair.

Now what I am anxious to state, is, that however much, or however little of this may be true, it is nothing at all to the question before us. There is a duty in regard to public worship, which is entirely independent of the feelings of any one.

And while I surrender on the part of the clergy, all claim to be particularly considered in this case, I may at least demand that the merits of the case itself, shall be fully estimated by the community. I wish, in short, to place this subject on its original and proper basis; and I take it to be this.—Public worship implies a social compact. We unite in it, we unite to promote it as an institution, because we believe that it is consonant with the will of God, because we believe that it is useful to ourselves and our children, and useful to the community at large. We are therefore obviously bound to promote this institution by as much as we hold it to be valuable. But it is equally obvious, that the principal and especial method of promoting it, is by giving our personal attendance. Without this there can be no worship offered by the community as such; that is to say, there can be no public worship. It is not like an affair of business, which can be transacted, which can be passed through its forms at least, by a few in behalf of hundreds who are absent, though equally interested in it. It is not a business that can be done by proxy, or by representation. It is rather like society, which cannot be had, without the gathering of its members. I shall have occasion to make a still further use of this comparison. It is sufficient for the present to say, that he who without any especial cause allows himself to be absent from public worship, adopts a principle, which, if other men were to act upon it, would destroy the institution.

All this, I think, must be very clear. Our conduct proclaims that we hold the institution to be valuable, and the slightest reflection must show us, that it can be supported only by our personal attention. But how valuable is it? How strict an attention does it demand or deserve?

On this point let me add to what I have already said at the commencement of this letter, that without public worship there can be no sabbath; no day, that is, set apart to orderly and innocent rest from the labors of life. These institutions, I repeat, must stand or fall together. Without public worship the sabbath, it is obvious, would degenerate into a mere holiday, a day of sports and revels. It would be so, that is to say, not to the devout few, but it would be so to the multitude. Or, else, the sabbath would be abolished entirely, and merged in the days of secular toil and business. And I fearlessly say,—though this is not the place to enter into the subject—I would say, not as a Christian only but as a statesman, not merely as a re-

ligious man, but as a worldly man, that with the entire abolition or total perversion of the sabbath, the world would lose the strongest hold it has, on its virtue, order, peace, and welfare.

‘But,’ it may be said, ‘has my occasional or even frequent absence from church, any tendency to produce this result? The institution will doubtless be maintained among us, as it has been for two hundred years past, notwithstanding any occasional neglects of mine or others.’ I do not know that. It is not against occasional neglects only, that this institution has to contend, but against increasing neglects. The fashion of the day is tending to neglect. The numbers are growing, of those who are only occasional, or of those who are only morning attendants at the sanctuary. If the evil—I must call it so—advances as rapidly for a century to come, as it has for the last ten years, one half or three quarters of the congregations in our cities at least, will be absent from the afternoon service. The next step will be, as in some parts of Europe, to drop this service entirely. From this, it will not require a great stride to reach the situation of other multitudes in Europe, who have relinquished all attendance on public worship. There will not be, in this country, even a mass to call a few to prayers in the morning. Neither will superstition here gather its multitude of servile votaries to worship relics and images. Meanwhile, in the absence of all hereditary distinctions, the stream of influence will find no barriers to interrupt its course from the highest classes to the lowest. What the wealthy and the distinguished do, others will do.

In circumstances like these I deem it not too much to say, that every reflecting man will look with apprehension to the consequences. So far as outward barriers are concerned, the institutions of public worship and the sabbath are more likely to be broken down in this country than in any other. If the virtue, if the intelligence, if the mind of this country fails to sustain these institutions, they will fall inevitably. There will be nothing left to uphold them. Every effort, however humble, therefore, to enlighten that mind on so momentous a subject, and to put that virtue on its guard, may rightfully expect peculiar favor, and may fairly hope to find sufficient apology for peculiar boldness. I cannot think it too serious to remind the neglecters of public worship of the account which every man has to settle with posterity; with his children, and his children’s children. I ought to observe in this place, that I do not intend,

in what I am now saying, to speak of the case of any who have conscientious scruples arising from a particular juncture of religious experience. I would make allowance for peculiar feelings and temporary doubts of this nature. But I would nevertheless put those who entertain them, with all others whom it may concern, to the general issue on this great question. And I say again, that I do not think it too serious to remind them that they may be leaving a legacy of neglect, which after generations will have cause to lament. The days of indulgence and luxury are coming, such as have never yet been seen among us, and the bands of order, virtue, and religion, which are to hold in safety the free people of this growing empire, must be stronger, yes, and purer, than ever were drawn by the arm of despotic or ecclesiastical power. Our boasting, I am aware, would seem to show that we are at ease on this point; but our boasting, like that of every past empire, may prove to be vain. If we are corrupted, we are lost. If the institutions of public worship and the sabbath are destroyed, or if they decline, just in that proportion are the strongest visible supports of order and virtue prostrated. Once more, then, shall I venture to say, that those who are the first to give respectability and currency to the example of this neglect, may have more to answer for, than has ever entered into their imaginations. If the institutions of religion ever fall among us, it will be by slow decline. If there is a decline, it must have its commencement. There must be some to begin it. And assuredly it becomes every man to pause, before he lays the train to consequences so fearful.

I know how easily a man may say, that he does not see this train of consequences, that he does not believe in it, and therefore that he holds himself free from any such responsibility. But, let me ask him, does the easiness of his mind on this point, arise from reflection, or from mere carelessness, and the love of indulgence? In what way, if these dreaded results are ever to appear, in what way are they to be brought about? In what but the way of neglect, and above all, of neglect commencing with the more respectable classes of society? Nay more, point me to the nation in which, with the growth of wealth, and luxury, and indulgence, religious institutions have not declined. Point me to the instance in which this decline has not commenced with the opulent, the respectable, the powerful. Greece and Rome, Italy and Germany may each read

to us a solemn lesson, to illustrate these momentous and alarming statements. Here you may see trains of consequences, and listen to the prophetic voice of warning. Shall it not awaken even one salutary apprehension? Shall men never shrink from the evil they may do, till they see it done? Shall irretrievable injury be the only thing palpable and powerful enough, to arouse the moral caution that might have prevented it? Shall those, whom the good and merciful God has raised up to be eminent in influence,—shall they forever consider themselves as exalted only that they may be the more indifferent to the welfare of their fellow beings and of their country? Why do we wonder or complain that all nations have taken the downward course, when the fairest earthly gifts of Heaven have always been thus perverted to the counteraction of its benevolent designs!

In all this, I do not contend for any needless austerity in the observance of the sabbath. There is a general superstition and a Puritanical strictness, which infects, I do not doubt, and injures the minds of multitudes in this country. We want no demure looks nor gloomy penances on a day which is preeminently designed for the promotion of religion and happiness. There ought to be no unnecessary or severe restraints enjoined. When the duties of private meditation, or reading, and public worship are discharged, I cannot conceive that a quiet walk, or a friendly interview and cheerful conversation ought to be considered as an offence against the proper character of the sabbath. But while this is admitted, it must still be maintained, that without public worship, this character of the sabbath, as a day of quietness and rest, cannot be preserved at all; nay, not without public worship in both parts of the day. If a morning service only be kept up, a space will be left, for something more than moderate and innocent relaxation; a space for convivial entertainments, for excursions of parties of pleasure, for evening assemblies, or the introduction of the theatre.

But it is time to consider the reasons that may be offered for the neglect of public worship. I have implied all along, that there are difficulties in the way of a regular attendance at church. These difficulties or objections may mostly be resolved into the three following; the inconvenience of the hour of assembling, the inclemency of the weather, and the indifferent character of the service.

The inconvenience of the hour of assembling.

This objection of course relates to the afternoon service. And I am free to confess, that the objection is one of considerable weight and deserves to be well considered. I hold it to be, not a sufficient excuse for non-attendance, but a good reason for inquiring into the expediency of a change. Unless there be some very material argument, some necessity for it, in fact, it would seem to be obviously wrong to appoint the most interesting season of our lives, in the dullest and most oppressive period that could be selected from the whole day. It certainly must be a mistake, whether we consider the claims of devotion, or the claims of a just moral prudence. We wish, if we have any piety, any reflection, any regard to the continuance and prosperity of our devotional institutions, we wish that the hour of public worship should be a season of wakeful and earnest meditation, and high enjoyment. But in the way we are now proceeding, at least with one part of our services, we take the most direct and certain method to prevent this; we take the most direct and certain method to bring this service into that very neglect and disuse, which is so much to be dreaded.

I will speak plainly. I do not want to see an assembly of people that have come together to spend, in church, the most heavy and sluggish hour of the day. And in our cities and villages there is no need of it. A later hour of the afternoon, or an hour of the evening may just as well be selected; or if not just as well, at least it can be adopted at the expense of an evil infinitely less than that of a dull and slothful season of worship. In the country, I know, the case is different; but there, too, the same evil does not exist. Those who come a considerable distance to church, and remain during the intermission, do not dine in fact till after the second service. Let no one evade the force of these considerations by saying, that I give too much importance to the matter of eating and drinking. It is the law of all animal life, it is the necessity of our own nature, that the thoughts should be less active and vigorous after the principal meal of the day is taken. What student then goes to his books? what philosopher, to his studies? what mathematician, to his investigations? what poet, what orator, to the fervid exercise of mind that is to prepare him to gain acceptance with his fellow men? And what business has the religious man to select such an hour for his devotions?

What business has he then to prepare and offer the service that is to seek acceptance with his Maker?

I am aware that this is a subject of some delicacy. I do not forget that there are different opinions upon it. But I must be allowed to testify what I have seen. The very face of an audience assembled in these circumstances, is dull. There is in this respect a manifest difference between the morning and afternoon service. In the latter, there are often witnessed painful signs of lassitude, nay, and instances of sleep in congregations which never at any other time exhibit the same spectacle. And when it appears, it is every way an evil spectacle. It communicates dulness to others, or it does worse by affording them a most unseemly entertainment. It chills the heart of the preacher. Besides, he comes to the service himself often and unavoidably weary and spiritless. He has not had time to recover himself, and is obliged to endure the inexpressible pain of bringing to the worship of his Maker an exhausted and jaded mind—a trial which no man can understand who has not experienced it. And this, moreover, is not his own and individual concern only; for the congregation must necessarily be affected by the vigor or the lassitude of his feelings. He may, indeed, by a great effort throw off this lassitude. He may arouse himself to a mechanical fervor, or his devotional feelings may carry him beyond his strength; but it will all result only in the more confirmed injury to his health, and through this means, to the congregation, to whom the service of his life is pledged.

Such, then, are the objections to the usual hour of the afternoon service, and they are real objections. It will be allowed that I have given them sufficient importance. It will be thought by some that I have given them quite too much. Be this as it may, I entertain a conviction none the less decided and strong, that they do by no means justify the neglect of this service. There may be an inconvenience; but is that to be put in comparison with an injury to society? There may be an error in the arrangement of one portion of our religious services; but shall we make the case better, by the entire abolition of that portion of the means of religious improvement? It requires but a small change in our domestic arrangements for the day—or to speak explicitly, for I would be understood on this point—it requires but to postpone the hour of dining till after the second service, to relieve the objection to attending church in

the afternoon, with most persons, of nearly all its weight. And I think it right to add, that for those who find themselves stupid and sluggish at church, it is a manifest and bounden duty to make some such arrangement. At any rate, if any valuable interest of society is involved in this matter—and this is the great question—if a practice is beginning among us, which endangers the present happy order and course of our religious institutions; if it is the very practice, which, through a long train of consequences, has led to the prevailing neglect of religious observances in more than half of Christendom, then may it be fairly put to us, not as good Christians only, but as good citizens, whether we will lend our influence to the example.

And now I can imagine that some one may exclaim—‘What! are we to be bound to church going, whether we will or no? Is it proposed to bring back the days of the Puritan hierarchy? Are we to have tythingmen to take note of our doings?’ No, indeed; these things have gone by. But I would none the less fearlessly commit every man to conscience as his overseer, to the bond of principle as to a command, and to the holy dominion of the fear of God, as to a law. Are the inward monitor, and the common weal, and the fear of God, weaker bonds than dotard superstition and church power? Are we only the more free, to be the more indifferent to obligations like these?

The next difficulty in the way of a regular and constant attendance at church is the *frequent inclemency of the weather*. Its frequency in our climate, makes this objection, if it be valid, a very serious matter. So variable is our climate, and so easily are excuses of this kind admitted, that the attendance upon divine service is materially interrupted during almost one quarter of the year.

Now let me ask, is any thing else interrupted for this cause? Does the business of life depend on the changes of the thermometer? Does any man refuse to go to his shop or to his warehouse, because he says ‘the sky lowereth and it will rain?’ Why then does he establish an entirely new rule for himself, on the sabbath? Or does he say that public worship is a thing of very inferior consequence? Does he think that his own welfare and the happiness of society depend more on his buying and selling, than they do on storing his mind with religious thoughts, and promoting the means of sacred order and virtue in the community? Allow that both are important, it is

all I ask. Allow that the claims of business are imperious; yet let it be remembered, that the bond of trade is virtue, that the security of business, every promise, every oath, has its strength in conscience and the fear of God.

I have compared public worship in one respect to society. Let me compare them in another; and that is, in the exertion, and I will add, the expense that may be required by a regular attendance. Admit, then, what is called the necessity of business;—though I apprehend, our estimate of what is necessary in life, is not only very worldly, but even on this ground very shortsighted;—but admit this necessity of business. Yet may we not ask, that as much shall be done and expended to frequent public worship, as is done and expended to frequent society? I do not perceive that our entertainments, parties, assemblies, or theatres are neglected for the severities or uncomfortableness of the weather. Means, defences, conveyances are provided, and the exertion and the expense are submitted to of course and without a complaint. Is it unjust to lay it down as a requisition and a rule that every one shall do and afford as much to go to church, as he would to be present at a social visit or a party of pleasure? I am unable to perceive that any fair objection can be alleged against the propriety of this rule. It will not be said that social opportunities are less frequent than those of devotion, and therefore to be sought with more pains. On the contrary, as society is conducted in most of our cities and villages, the reverse is true. Besides, let it be remembered as still more material in the argument, that a man may do more good both to himself and to others by going to church, than by going to a party of pleasure, or a social entertainment. And yet there are many, many who would think it hard not to be accounted good Christians, too, who habitually go out, in dark and stormy nights, to be present at parties of pleasure, who in the comparatively favorable circumstances of daylight and moderate inclemency of weather, find it too inconvenient to attend church. Nay, they often go out, not for their own pleasure, any more than the merest slave of superstition goes to mass or to church for his own pleasure. They go to sacrifice at the shrine of ceremony and custom, and yet they cannot go to sacrifice at the shrine of holy worship! The temple of fashion is filled, is crowded, in circumstances which would cause the temple of religion to be almost wholly deserted! The God of this world is worshipped,

when the God of heaven and earth hath none to seek after him, or at most a small band of worshippers, so few and feeble, that their coming together is a heaviness and a discouragement !

But the greatest objection of all, and the last which is now to be noticed, is *the indifferent character of the service.*

‘If I were sure of always hearing something eloquent and admirable,’ says the delinquent, ‘I should go ; but the preacher is dull ; the service is wearisome. In short, I do not wish to go. And why,’ continues the complainant, ‘why should I be urged upon this point ? What good will it do me to go to church, if I go thus reluctantly, if I do not wish to go ?’

To reply to the minor part of the objection first, I should say that I see no more reason why a man should not be exhorted to the public worship of God, when he is averse to it, than why he should not be exhorted to any other duty which he is unwilling to perform. We do not expect to be uniformly delighted with any of our pursuits, yet we do not swerve from them for want of the stimulus of pleasure. The student resorts to his books, the merchant to his accounts, the laborer to his toils, though they sometimes are irksome. And if the case is unhappily so bad, if it is at any time a hardship to visit the sanctuary, yet even then, unpropitious as this state of mind would be, it would scarcely constitute a sufficient reason for absence from church. Rather might it not be urged at such a time, that the place of meditation and prayer should be visited on purpose to acquire a better, a more pious disposition.

And on this point, and one other, I now proceed to say, rests the true answer to the main part of the objection which has just been stated. The services of the sanctuary would not be indifferent, if they were approached with just views and a right temper of mind. There is a misapprehension, in the first place, of the proper object of our attendance at church. We go, or ought to go, not merely or chiefly to be entertained with the discourse, but we should go to worship our Maker and to cherish and confirm the sentiments of piety. We go, or ought to go, not to be the passive recipients of whatever impressions may be made on us ; not to have the work of our religion done for us, but to engage for ourselves in meditation and prayer. The minister at the altar is merely our assistant in these offices. This is the point of light in which he should be regarded. He may not be all we could wish. That is not

material. We ought to receive what aid he can give us, whether it be more or less.

Let us, then, take these views of public worship, and let us also have the right disposition of heart, and no religious service ever would be dull to us. Nay, the latter of itself would be sufficient. Let a heavenly disposition carry us to the sanctuary; let it be strong and earnest, and in any proportion to that earthly disposition that carries us to so many other places of resort, and indifference would be a thing unknown. Indifferent voluptuaries, indifferent stockjobbers, and in the halls of legislation indifferent aspirants after fame, there are none, and it needs but half of the same zeal in devotion to banish from us indifferent worshippers. It needs but half of the same zeal to banish from our churches, forever, this miserable complaint of dullness. Assuredly if there is any thing on earth or in heaven, that can touch every spring of feeling in us, that can awaken all glorious admiration, that can awaken all ineffable joy, it is the contemplation and love of God. Would to God that our churches might be crowded with those who will worship in this spirit and joy! Would that the voice of the priest and the people might be this one—‘Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?’ Then might it be said—‘Blessed is the people, that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.’ D.

Poetry.

‘MAN GIVETH UP THE GHOST, AND WHERE IS HE?’

Where is he? Hark! his lonely home
Is answering to the mournful call!
The setting sun with dazzling blaze,
May fire the windows of the hall;
But evening shadows quench the light,
And all is cheerless, cold, and dim,
Save where one taper wakes at night,
Like weeping love remembering him.

Where is he? Hark! the friend replies—
 ‘I watched beside his dying bed,
 And heard the low and struggling sighs
 That gave the living to the dead;
 I saw his weary eyelids close,
 And then,—the ruin coldly cast
 Where all the loving and beloved,
 Though sadly parted, meet at last.’

Where is he? Hark! the marble says—
 ‘’Twas here the mourners laid his head;
 And here sometimes in after days
 They came and sorrowed for the dead;
 But one by one they passed away,
 And soon they left me here alone
 To sink in unobserved decay,
 A nameless and neglected stone.’

Where is he? Hark! the graves reply—
 ‘Why ask where single ruins fall,
 When they that mourn them soon must lie
 Beneath the churchyard’s dark-green pall?
 Perhaps the earthworm bears away
 The rifled treasure of the tomb,
 Or mingling with its native clay
 It feeds some flow’ret’s annual bloom.’

Where is he? Hark! ’tis Heaven replies—
 ‘The starbeam of the purple sky
 That looks beneath the evening’s brow
 Mild as some beaming angel’s eye,
 As calm and clear it gazes down,
 Is shining from his place of rest
 The pearl of his immortal crown,
 The heavenly radiance of the blest.’

W. P.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN EXAMINER.

SIR,

The following are two poems lately received from Mrs Hemans. In a letter accompanying the first, she says;—‘I have just composed a few lines on reading a description in one of our papers of Washington’s statue by Chantry. Its being sent from England to America, now that we may hope that all feelings of animosity are yielding to kindlier and more brotherly sentiments, is a most striking and interesting circumstance. The lines have not been published.

nor will they at present appear in any English work, as I should wish them to reach my New England friends first.*—As the statue may be expected to arrive here about the time when the next number of the Examiner will appear, there can be no more appropriate season for their publication.

Cambridge, April 14, 1827.

WASHINGTON'S STATUE.

SENT FROM ENGLAND TO AMERICA.

Yes ! rear thy guardian Hero's form,
On thy proud soil, thou Western World !
A watcher through each sign of storm,
O'er Freedom's flag unfurled.

There, as before a shrine to bow,
Bid thy true sons their children lead ;
—The language of that noble brow
For all things good shall plead.

The spirit reared in patriot fight,
The virtue born of home and hearth,
There calmly throned, a holy light
Shall pour o'er chainless earth.

And let that work of England's hand,
Sent through the blast and surges' roar,
So girt with tranquil glory, stand
For ages on thy shore !

Such through all time the greetings be,
That with the Atlantic billows sweep !
Telling the mighty and the free
Of brothers o'er the deep !

HE WALKED WITH GOD.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

* And Enoch walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him.
Genesis, Chap. v. v. 24.

He walked with God in holy joy,
While yet his days were few ;
The deep glad spirit of the Boy,
To love and reverence grew.

Whether, each nightly star to count,
 The ancient hills he trod,
 Or sought the flowers by stream and fount,
 Alike he walked with God.

The graver noon of manhood came,
 The full of cares and fears ;
 One voice was in his heart—the same
 It heard through childhood's years.
 Amidst fair tents, and flocks, and swains,
 O'er his green pasture sod,
 A shepherd king on Eastern plains,
 The Patriarch walked with God.

And calmly, brightly, that pure life
 Melted from earth away ;
 No pang it knew, no parting strife,
 No sorrowful decay.
 He bowed him not, like all beside,
 Unto the Spoiler's rod,
 But joined at once the glorified,
 Where angels walk with God.

So let *us* walk—the night must come
 To us that comes to all ;
 We through the darkness must go home,
 Hearing the Trumpet's call.
 Closed is the path for evermore
 Which without death he trod ;—
 Not so that way, wherein of yore,
 His footsteps walked with God !

Review.

ART. V.—*The Rights of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts.—The Result of an Ecclesiastical Council convened at Groton, Massachusetts, July 17, 1826.* Boston, T. R. Marvin, 1827, 8vo. pp. 64.

PERHAPS there never was a more palpable *misnomer* than is to be found in the title of this extraordinary pamphlet. Instead of the 'Rights,' it should have been entitled the 'Usur-

pations' of the early churches of Massachusetts over their christian brethren; over those, who,—professing themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ, admitting his divine authority, receiving his doctrines and precepts as the revelation of God, and contributing to the maintenance of public christian worship,—feel, and know, that they enjoy, and are entitled to hold and possess an entire equality of privileges with those who call themselves, by way of eminence, the members of Christ's church. But to no privilege do they think their title clearer than to that of an equal voice in the selection of their teachers and pastors, upon whose ministry they attend, and for whose support they pay in proportion to their property. Yet this privilege, this dearest right of Congregationalists, unequivocally confirmed to them by our State Constitution and a succession of legal decisions, is by the pamphlet before us called in question. The exercise of it is there maintained to be unscriptural, and unreasonable; contrary to New England usages, and a *sound* interpretation of our laws. In fine, the professed design of this little book is, to take a stand at the polls and revolutionize the state; to reverse the unanimous decisions of all the judges we have had in our Supreme Court for fifteen years; remodel our admirable Bill of Rights, and restore to the injured church,* powers wrested from her by artful, proselyting makers and interpreters of the law. The good people of Massachusetts, it seems, have even been cajoled into the exercise of these powers; and had they seen the drift of what was doing for them, they would long ago have revolted against the enjoyment of such unlawful privileges.

But we are utterly unable to perceive why there should be an equality in civil concerns, and a perpetual and odious aristocracy, a never dying house of lords and bishops in the church. We cannot perceive how it is possible, that one fifth part of a whole society should possess, *de jure*, not only a negative, a *veto* on the doings of the other four fifths, but that having exerted this power, they should have a right to vote again in the lower body, 'the world,' as it is contemptuously called. When we ask by what means, by what species of merit, this power has been acquired, we are answered that the members of this privileged caste, have been admitted by vote into the aristocracy. Is this power of admission or rejection absolute?

* In this article, the word church is used in almost every instance in its narrowest, technical sense; denoting merely the body of communicants, the church members, so called, in our Congregational societies.

Yes. Is there no remedy to compel a church to receive a communicant or fellow it has unjustly rejected? No. Can they reject an applicant because his creed differs from their own, though his moral character be unexceptionable? Yes. Do they require him to say any thing more than that he is a believer in the divine mission and authority of our Saviour? Yes; if the church be one which the authors of this Result would acknowledge as a true christian church, he must solemnly assent to all the propositions in which some frail and ignorant man has expressed his religious opinions. If he refuse to do this, he cannot come to the Lord's supper; he is forbidden to do that, which his Master enjoined upon him to do. He is not only deprived of his religious rights, forbidden to perform his christian duties, but, according to the doctrine of this Result, his civil rights are infringed. His inalienable civil right is, to have *an equal voice with ALL his fellow citizens in the election of those whom he is bound to support.* That right was secured finally to him by our Constitution, and has been decided so to be by the highest courts of law, with a unanimity on the part of the judges, almost without example. It is however controverted in the Result before us, which was drawn up by Drs Beecher and Porter,—two Connecticut gentlemen, who, it appears, are exceedingly distressed by the ignorance of our courts of law, and the submission of our people to their authority.

By the third article of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of Massachusetts, it is declared in the simplest and clearest words, that towns, parishes, precincts and other bodies politic, or religious societies, shall have the right of electing their own teachers. These descriptions are perfectly technical. They are as well known to our laws as any terms whatever. No lawyer who makes any pretension to a respectable standing in his profession, would hazard his reputation by denying, that these words gave to parishes, and *all the members* of religious societies, the exclusive right of voting in the settlement of a minister. The effect and operation of this clause, came under the consideration of our Supreme Judicial Court about twelve or fifteen years since, and was settled in favor of religious liberty and natural right, in conformity with the clear import of the clause in the Bill of Rights, by Judges Parsons, Sedgwick, Sewall, Thacher, and Parker in the cases of *Avery vs. Tyingham* and *Burr vs. Sandwich*.

The weight of any legal decision depends very much on the

ability of the judges, and on their unanimity. It is proper, therefore, that it should be known, that the rights of non-communicants in the election of their pastor, have been sustained by Chief Justice Parsons, and Judges Sedgwick, Sewall, Thacher, Parker, Jackson, Putnam, Wilde. The decisions establishing them were made from twelve to fifteen years since; were printed and circulated through the State; were well known to every Orthodox divine and church in the community. Yet no church in the State, to our knowledge, has objected to them. In 1816, Dr Morse from Connecticut and Dr Lyman were very zealous in the good work of introducing the Connecticut system of Consociations. It is well known that they made a report to the Convention of Ministers, which was referred by the Convention to the people, and which was so odious, that not one parish approved of and accepted it. Yet these learned divines never intimated an opinion, that the rights of the churches had been infringed by the decisions of the courts of law. The General Association of Massachusetts, which was intended to supply the place of the Connecticut Consociations, has, we believe, been equally silent as to this supposed aggression on church rights.

At last came the most respectable and able Convention, which Massachusetts ever had; that assembled to revise the Constitution. In this body, there were Orthodox clergymen, deacons of churches, Orthodox lawyers,—men able and astute, firm and vigorous in defence of the rights of the church. The third article of the Bill of Rights was especially the object of notice. Every member of that house knew that the Supreme Judicial Court had decided against the high pretensions of church members. There was not an objection made against these decisions; not an attempt to restore the usurpations of the church. The debate turned wholly upon the support of religious worship by law, and did not touch at all upon the right of electing pastors.

Upon the ground of this statement of facts, which cannot be disproved or denied, we pronounce this Result to be a literary curiosity, unique for its fearless assertions, for its contempt of judicial authority, and of the opinions of a whole people. If the gentlemen who prepared it had stated fairly, that Judge Parsons's decision was made nearly fifteen years since, that the Convention had been since assembled and after full deliberation had left the law as Judge Parsons had pronounced it, but

that still neither the Supreme Court, nor the Convention understood the legal question, we might have praised their frankness, though we should have smiled at their presumption and vanity.

We are told by these learned Connecticut theologians, that our ancestors in 1641, confined the right of election of the pastors to the church members by statute. This fact is not denied by any one. It is explicitly admitted by all the learned judges in their arguments. But what inference would the advocates for church rights draw from this uncontested fact? That it was *right*? that it was scriptural and irrevocable? We should soon shew them, that such a presumption is utterly unfounded. The same persons decided, that no man should vote even in town affairs, no man should be a freeman, unless he were a church member; *a fortiori*, not a member of the legislature. Will Dr Beecher maintain that this was a reasonable provision? The same men maintained, that the Mosaic criminal law was binding on us. Do our divines approve of this wise determination? Do they believe that the judicial murders committed under the forms of law upon some unhappy old women, for a supposed intercourse with the devil, were justifiable?

We know what the reply must be to these questions. We know also, that Cotton Mather, whose '*Ratio Disciplinæ*' is cited by the Council, went all the length of the most superstitious among the vulgar, on these topics. Are we bound to feel a profound respect for one particular abuse which survived that age, the exclusive right of the church members to elect the pastor? When we come to the argument, we shall show, that this pretension of the church was always sharply disputed, and never enforced after 1692.

We now proceed to consider the particular case which these gentlemen have selected as affording a fit opportunity to bring forward their objections to the provisions of the Constitution of this State, and to the law, settled as it is by repeated judicial decisions. The history of the case itself is instructive, and shows to what an extent the usurpation of a church may be carried.

Dr Chaplin a venerable and excellent pastor, having, we regret to say it, become unable to perform his parochial duties, proposed to his people the settlement of a colleague. The Doctor and his church, or a majority of them, believed that

they had an exclusive right to invite candidates. 'Providentially,' they say—and it was a very favorable providence,—there was a Mr Todd from Andover 'present.' It was evidently one of those *prepared* providences, which so often occur in human affairs; or to speak frankly, for we are indignant at such a profanation of the name of the Almighty, the Orthodox majority of the church had *foreseen* this event; had prepared for it; had arranged the whole course of procedure at headquarters,* and Mr Todd *providentially*, as we are told, found himself on the spot, at the most pressing moment of Dr Chaplin's need. Mr Todd accordingly preached and was some time after engaged by Dr Chaplin for eight sabbaths. The church, consisting, we believe, of between twentyfive and thirty male members in a parish in which there were about three hundred voters, finally, by a vote of seventeen to eight, gave Mr Todd a call. The parish, it would seem from the Result, thought this measure of the church rather too strong. After full trial, they found that they did not like Mr Todd; for on the 25th of November they voted to appoint a committee to supply the pulpit, treating as it deserved, the usurpation of the church over rights so completely secured to them by the Constitution, and the solemn decisions of the Supreme Court thereon.

Dr Chaplin, although he knew that the church had given Mr Todd a call, agreed, when the parish committee called upon him, that they might fill the pulpit for four sabbaths. The vote of the parish was, to fill it for four months. Their committee, except for the first sunday when there was no preaching, actually supplied it from the date of their appointment, and the only objection on the part of the church, which we can perceive, was, that it was filled by Unitarian clergymen; though we admit that there hardly could be supposed a more important objection in the minds of those, who deny the christian character to Unitarians. Dr Chaplin's patience becoming at length exhausted, the following note was addressed to the parish committee, and the Council seem to consider it a very proper one.

'GENTLEMEN,—After mature reflection, I have thought it my

* Mr Todd, it is said, was sent to Groton, one of the richest towns in the county of Middlesex, at the expense of an Orthodox missionary fund. This discovery, for the fact was concealed, had no small share in producing disaffection to Mr Todd and to the Orthodox policy.

duty to remonstrate once more, against your thrusting a man into my pulpit against my wishes, and, as I believe, against the wishes of a majority of this people. Yours, &c.

January 7th, 1827.

DANIEL CHAPLIN.*

What a strange aspect does the subject assume to us now? The *concurrent* right of election is admitted explicitly and repeatedly by the Council, but it is contended that the right to select the candidates is vested *exclusively* in the *disabled* incumbent, and his church! * In the present case, the church actually proceeded to an election, without giving the majority the opportunity of hearing a preacher of their own choice even for a single sabbath. This, we trust, is not a specimen of Orthodox justice and apprehension of right.

The parish committee were calm and resolved. They knew that the Constitution had guaranteed to them the right of election, and of necessity the depending right of selecting candidates. Dr Chaplin speaks of '*thrusting a man into his pulpit against his wishes.*' Is this correct? In May preceding, he had expressed to his people a wish to have a colleague. They had therefore a legal right to choose one. The right to choose includes the right to select candidates. Dr Chaplin had parted with his right to exclude those whom he did not like, by inviting the parish to provide a colleague. Surely no man will be so absurd as to contend that the parish, even if they had but a *concurrent* vote, had no right to select their candidate. Jesuitical mockery it would indeed be, if the church could say to the parish, 'You may choose as you please. You have entire freedom of election; but you shall never hear a preacher on probation, who has not been graduated at Andover; who does not bear the genuine stamp, so as to render it sure that he is not counterfeit.'

But we own we are unable to comprehend what is meant by the property of a pastor in his pulpit. It is not a new thought. We heard something like this claim about fifteen years since; but we acknowledge that it is to us a mystery. The church and the pulpit are the property of the parish. The pas-

* It is not among the least remarkable circumstances in this case, that Dr Chaplin himself came into his present office in a very irregular way, and in violation of church order. His predecessor, the Rev. Mr Dana, was under the suspicion of not being friendly to the Revolution. Without any ecclesiastical proceedings whatever, as we are informed, the town voted to dismiss him, and chose Dr Chaplin, who held his office for many years while the rightful incumbent, according to church discipline, was living.

tor is the incumbent under contract. If he become *unable* to perform his contract, his right, legally speaking, is gone; though in our judgment, base indeed is the conduct of that christian society, which in all cases would avail itself of its *legal* rights. But most assuredly when by the act of God the incumbent is deprived of his ability to do his duty, and especially when he avows that inability, and invites his people to select a colleague, his rights over his pulpit are, *pro hac vice*, gone; they are utterly extinct, so far as it respects the new candidate.

Such was the unhappy case, which Dr Beecher and others selected as a proper occasion for them to teach the courts and people of Massachusetts, what the laws of Massachusetts are, and what are the rights and duties of the good, honest, but blind people of this ancient State; to read them a lecture on their degeneracy; to threaten them with dreadful retribution,—from whom, or of what nature they do not undertake to state, knowing, probably, that terror is always greater in proportion as the objects of it are dimly and obscurely perceived.

The first remark we shall make, is, that the question whether the decisions of the Supreme Judicial Court were in direct violation of the constitutional and legal rights of churches, hardly seems to have been submitted to this learned Council. The judgment pronounced by Drs Beecher and Porter, appears as perfectly gratuitous on their part, as if the Andover Theological Faculty itself, had, *ex proprio motu*, assembled and undertaken to review, arraign, and condemn the decisions of the highest court of law in the State without the invitation of any party interested. It was a voluntary, and, as we think, impertinent intrusion of opinion. The Council was not a mutual council, but an *ex parte* one; a council not deciding on theological, but civil questions.

The Council say, page 61, that 'so far as we can learn, but *one* denomination of professed Christians in the State, have given any evidence of approbation of the law [which decides the right of electing the pastor to be in the whole people,] or sought to avail themselves of it, and *that* a recent, and, compared with the *freemen* belonging to other denominations, a *very small* denomination.'

What are we to understand by this? That the liberal Christians are a *new* denomination? They are Congregationalists; what were the members of this Council? The liberal clergy are, and always have been received as members of the

Convention of *Congregational* ministers. One of them is Treasurer of that body. Is it competent in this Council to expel from the bosom of the church a large portion of the Congregational clergy and parishioners in the State? Are these the first fruits of this importation of followers of the Saybrook Platform? Why this contemptuous suggestion of the 'recent' origin, and of the 'small' number of the liberal Christians? The laws in question do not apply to the Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Baptists, the Universalists, and the Methodists. They were designed for the Congregationalists—and will this Council, as christian ministers, dare to say, that in the *Congregational* church the liberal Christians are 'a very small' party? They know it to be otherwise; and as to their opinions being 'recent,' we may refer these gentlemen to Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke, or to President Adams, who enumerates many eminent divines of Massachusetts, who held these opinions in his youth, which must have been before the middle of the last century.—This language of contempt in which the Orthodox clergy too often indulge, may well be spared. It only proves the want of the true spirit of our holy religion, as well as a conviction that they are unable to meet liberal Christians, on the fair field of argument and scripture.

While a large portion of the Result is devoted to a question, as we have already said, not distinctly submitted to them, viz. whether the Supreme Judicial Court did, or did not understand, or wilfully misinterpret the Constitution and laws of this State, no notice whatever is taken of an important part of the third, and the whole of the fourth questions propounded to the Council by the small majority of the former Groton church. The part of the third question to which no reply is given, is, 'Whether the claim of the *minority* of the church to be considered the first church in Groton, *can* or *will* be sustained by civil or ecclesiastical power?' The Dedham case, which the Council appear to have studied with close attention, would have enabled them to reply, 'that the *deserted* minority of the Groton church could and would be held rightfully to be the first church in Groton, both by civil and ecclesiastical authority.' Was it not unkind, therefore, to lead the seceders into error, by omitting to state these decisions to them? Nay, was it the part of peaceable and loyal citizens to endeavour to impress the opposite opinions on the misguided and ill advised majority?

The fourth question is, 'Do this Council regard the minority of this church as having walked disorderly, and what course do they advise the church to take concerning them?' On this subject, the Council have preserved a prudent silence. They felt, that it would savour of the ridiculous to charge the minority with *disorderly walking*, merely because they did not desert the congregation, nor quit the house in which their fathers worshipped, or because they preferred a clergyman of liberal opinions. In Massachusetts we have not yet gone so far as the Consociations of Connecticut have done, by expelling a brother for heretical opinions; and as to excommunication, in this case, after the voluntary secession of the majority, it would have been about as wise, as the papal excommunication of the realm of England, after parliament and king had by solemn acts renounced the papal authority. Though the Council was silent, the church, it seems, did proceed to the thunders of excommunication; but the lightning did not strike.

In this stage of our remarks, we would advert for a moment to the arrogant style of this Result. No bishop of the Romish or English church, would dare to use language so haughty, and insulting towards the great mass of Christians, who are non-communicants, and who comprise, among us, seven eighths of the christian public. They are contemptuously stigmatized as the 'world,' and lest you should doubt what they understand by this term, they define it to be the immoral, debauched, profane, and unbelieving part of society. You are warned expressly, that if the election of the pastor should devolve upon the non-communicants, there would be an end of all vital religion;—indeed they add that religion would not even be supported. Let us take a single example of their way of speaking.

'The amalgamation of the church,' it is said, 'with the *world*, in the election of *her* pastor, may seem a small thing to many; but small as it may seem, the *distinct* power of the church to elect *her* pastor, and admit and expel *her* members, independent of any secular alliance or influence, constitutes the mighty secret of uniting, in this alienated world, evangelical doctrine, vital godliness, and pure discipline, with *liberty of conscience*, equal civil rights, and permanent civil support.'—p. 61.

This is the language of the Result, and we confess that coming from Connecticut gentlemen of all others, it fills us with astonishment. The experience of that State, in which their doctrines have been reduced to practice, ought to have made them

hesitate to use it. Besides, if correct, the churches of Massachusetts have never, for one day, since 1692, according to the express admission of these Councilmen themselves, been in the enjoyment of this mighty secret of entire independence. They have never had the 'distinct power to elect their pastors.' The parish, the 'world,' the helots, the burden bearers, the paymasters have always had a negative; there has always been a 'secular alliance and influence.' But it is not, to our dim perceptions, easy to see any trace of 'liberty of conscience' in such a case as that of the Groton church. Thirty members are the church. They claim the right to 'admit or expel members.' They annex their own conditions. You must pronounce their creed, and 'assent and consent,'—two words in the act of uniformity of Charles II. which threw out two thousand dissenting clergymen on the famous St Bartholomew's day,—to a creed of their devising, or sixteen out of the thirty may exclude the other three hundred christian voters of the town, not merely from the communion, but from the right of voting with the church. Call you *this* liberty of conscience? The church members are to have a negative on the votes of the parish. The three hundred and thirty shall not hear the clergyman and the opinions they prefer, because sixteen men do not approve of them! Still they must pay, and give 'permanent civil support,' and this is misnamed 'equal civil rights.' The very claim is evidently an assumption that the church members have a monopoly of piety; aye, and of knowledge of the scriptures; and it is distinctly stated by this candid Council, that if the right of election be *restored* to the great mass of christian worshippers, from whom it has been wrenched, there will be an instantaneous decline and final extinction of religion. What a reproach on human nature! What distrust of that Being, who has declared that he will uphold his church, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

It is perhaps treating these broad assertions of the Council with too much consideration, to test their soundness by an appeal to experience; but we shall select one case for this purpose from their own Result. They admit that the society in Brattle Street, from its origin, elected their pastor in a general meeting of the church and parish. In short, its elections are as republican, as our civil ones have always been. What has been the effect in a trial of a century and one quarter? We say nothing of Colman, the two Coopers, Thacher, and Buckminster. Of course we

shall also be silent as to the living pastors. But we ask, what has been the character of the mass of that society? Have they been profligate, unprincipled, indifferent to the support of religious worship? Has the society not kept pace with any Orthodox church, in its zeal for the support of religion and in the moral and religious character of its members?

The truth is, that the suggestion is a slander on human nature. There is not the slightest foundation for the fears expressed, that the exercise of the natural rights of the whole christian society would be dangerous to the cause of vital piety. So far from it, we are convinced that the spirit of usurpation over these rights, which has been displayed by the Orthodox clergy and church members, has been exceedingly injurious to the spread of true religion.

It is now, as we have said, more than fifteen years since the courts of law gave the only possible construction which could be given to the Constitution, as to the right of electing religious teachers. Is it true that there has been the least diminution of zeal for religion? These Connecticut gentlemen know very little about our state of society. We know they consider it to be corrupt. Dr Dwight, with all his prejudices, had a more correct knowledge of the state of morals and religion here, and sufficient liberality to do us justice. Yes, insulted as we are by these laborers in our vineyards, who have come in at the eleventh hour, and have not borne the heat and burden of the day, we are confident that the moral and religious character of this State will compare even with that of their own, with all its Consociations and usurpations.—Perhaps we have said more on this point than the illiberal suggestion that has called forth these remarks, merited.

It would be too severe a trial of the patience of our readers, should we attempt to follow the Result in its rambling course of assertion, argument, and declamation. We can only select, in addition to those we have already noticed, some prominent parts, and show the little reliance we can place, either upon its statements of facts, or of legal principles. There is, throughout, a fearless rashness of assertion but too common in the theological writings of some of our sects. We do not make this remark in a spirit of censure; for we are fully aware, that the habit of dogmatizing, like all other bad habits, soon gets the mastery over our resolutions, and often renders us insensible when we are acting under its despotic influence. We are not, how-

ever, casuists enough to decide the precise shade of difference in a moral view, between assertions made at hazard, which those who make them, do not know to be true, and those which are made against knowledge and conviction. Christian charity will induce us to place the almost innumerable errors of fact in the pamphlet under review among the former.

Let us give a specimen of its unfounded assertions.

‘Our fathers came hither professedly to organize and establish churches, wholly *independent for existence*, on any *civil association*; and the right of electing their pastors was claimed and exercised by the *churches*, and recognised and confirmed by law, first in 1641, about twelve years from the commencement of the colony of Massachusetts, and again in 1668, after the commencement of the *parish controversy*, and again in 1695, at the *close of it*; and the churches continued in the uninterrupted enjoyment of this right until interrupted by the late decisions, a period of about one hundred and fifteen years.’—pp. 22, 23.

Again,

‘The churches existed for *eighty years* before the towns and parishes were allowed any voice in the election of a pastor; and then the right came in the form of a *concession*, on the *part of the churches*, and a *compromise*, in *consideration of the aid furnished by taxation*, for the support of the Gospel. And now, did the church depend for her existence and protection in law, upon her alliance with towns and parishes, when she had for almost an *hundred years*, enjoyed absolute independence, and was, in fact, the primary institution, for whose sake our Fathers came hither, and to whom these *civil associations* were made *subservient*, without the least shadow of alliance, or power of interference, and which were afterwards received into *partnership*, upon the specific condition, that each should enjoy a *concurrent vote* in the election of a pastor?’—pp. 29, 30.

Here is about as pleasant a foundation for a papacy, or at least a presbytery, as one might wish to see. The *State* was founded for the *Church*, and all its rights and privileges are the result of a *charter* on the part of the *church*! Civil associations were made subservient to *her*, as *her* champions would express it, and *she* takes them into *partnership*!

The truth is that there are as many errors in the statement quoted above, as there are sentences.

1st. So far from our fathers having refused any alliance between church and state, the whole history of Christendom can hardly disclose so close a one. To the state, the clergy went

for permission to hold a synod in order to force all men to think as they did. To the civil rulers, they applied to give to the proceedings of the synod the force of law; they demanded the arm of flesh to enforce their creeds.

2d. It is untrue that the concurrent right of election in the parish was a concession made by the churches. It was forced from them by public sentiment. They protested against it. They predicted, as these gentlemen now do, that the ruin and downfall of all religion would be the consequence of it. The parish owed this imperfect act of justice to the legislature, not to the church.

The true history of the case is this. In 1641, when the legislators were all church members, they made a law to perpetuate their own power. This is not an anomalous case. Men are always ready to relieve others of the labor of making laws, and to assume it themselves. But discontents of the most violent nature arose against the usurpation. This is expressly and repeatedly admitted by the Groton Council themselves.* The dispute was a sharp and angry one. The rights of the great body of Christians prevailed, and in 1692, the whole power of election was given to the *people*. The church made great efforts, and regained a portion of its power in 1693. The law then enacted gave a concurrent choice to the church and people. But the usurpers were dissatisfied with an equal division of power, and by aiming at too much, they have finally lost all;—an issue not by any means unusual to those who aim at unlawful power.

In 1695, the church had influence enough to procure a law which virtually gave the exclusive right of election to them, by bringing to their aid an ecclesiastical council. But why are these gentlemen so disingenuous as to speak of the act of 1695, as an *operative* one? They must know that it was so odious, that it was *never enforced in a single case* from that day to the present. The communicants acquired a power by that act which they never dared to exercise. Why, too, do they so often refer to the act of 1693, giving the concurrent power to the church, when they know that it was repealed by the act of

* See Result as quoted above, p. 136. Again;—‘The efforts of the church to hold, and of towns and parishes to acquire, the sole power in the election of the minister, produced *one of the fiercest controversies* that ever raged in the State, until it was composed by the compromise of 1695.’ Result, p. 40.

1695? These omissions, or misstatements, or mistakes, have no tendency to gain our confidence.

3d. One is not a little amused with the ease, with which these gentlemen extend the period of their usurpation. They begin by stating the duration of their dynasty, or exclusive power, to have been *eighty* years. The fact is that the power was taken from them in *sixty* years, and fiercely disputed *forty* years before. Soon after, this young right, which never had a legitimate existence, grows to the age of *nearly one hundred* years. We mention this inaccuracy, but it is unimportant in any other view than as tending to show, that this Result is rather poetical than historical and legal.

4th. They say, that the admission of the people to an equal, or concurrent vote in elections of ministers, was a concession made to the people in *consideration of the aid furnished by taxation*. There seems to be a small anachronism in this statement, even according to the facts adduced by our learned, but rather negligent friends. They state that the legal obligation on a town to support the pastor, originated in 1652, and the act giving to the parishes an equal voice, did not pass till 1693. Was this concession, then, the effect of the grant of taxation? Were the gratitude and sense of justice of the churches so very feeble, and the recognition of their duties so very tardy?

Lastly, these venerable Counsellors are still more mistaken in a more important assertion, which they repeat in many places with increased confidence; viz. 'that there never was any interruption to the concurrent claims of the church from 1695 down to the *late* decisions.' What a deplorable ignorance of *our history*! We are not in the least degree surprised at it, however, in gentlemen who are so ignorant of our laws and usages, that, instead of speaking of our 'inhabitants,' our 'citizens,' our 'people,' they almost invariably call the mass of voters the 'freemen,'—a phrase familiar in Connecticut, but which must appear as strange to our 'inhabitants,' 'citizens,' and 'people,' as if they had called them their 'high mightinesses.'

A tolerable acquaintance with our ecclesiastical history would have shown the Council at Groton, that frequent disputes arose between the church and people as to the right of choosing the pastor, between the passage of the stillborn act of 1695 and the adoption of the Constitution. We shall here cite a single

case, which of itself refutes the sweeping assertions of the Council, and which explains the reason why all parties, Orthodox and liberal, united in taking away the exclusive and unfounded pretensions of the church, by an explicit provision of the Constitution.

The case which we shall cite, was a very remarkable one. It is exceedingly instructive; because it shows to what hazard a religious people may be subjected by the fanaticism of a few members of the church. It was a case, in which the church changed its creed, while the parish retained their own; and we cannot refrain from asking, by the way, with all suitable reverence for this venerable Council, whether, if it had so happened that the church at Groton had been Unitarian, and the parish had remained Orthodox, we should have been instructed and enlightened by the learning of these gentlemen?

The pastoral office in the first church in Middleborough, in the year 1744, being vacant by the death of the Rev. William Thacher, a majority of the church,—having been converted to the doctrines and fanaticism of Whitfield, designated by the title of ‘new lights,’ and having thus abandoned the opinions which they and the congregation had before held,—were resolved not to agree to the choice of any minister who did not hold these new opinions.—These ‘new light’ opinions, we would remark by the way, were not those of our fathers. The Orthodox clergy do not now hold them; they opposed them at that time, and especially Whitfield’s field preaching. We ask these venerable Counsellors what are the rights of a parish, when a majority of the church desert their former principles? Are the parish bound by their proceedings? Must their faith follow that of a body of men, who are not their superiors in understanding, and often not their equals?

The church of Middleborough kept the parish in a state of confusion from May till September. They vexed and harassed them with contradictory votes and resolutions. On the 9th of September the majority of the church brought a clergyman of their own sentiments, without the assent of the parish, nay, when they knew the parish had provided another, and broke into the meetinghouse. Great disorder and disgraceful scenes ensued. The parish had more physical force and were victorious. They were not, however, insolent or intolerant. They invited the ‘new light’ preacher to fill the pulpit half the day.

The most essential part of the case was, that the parish and

minority of the church called a council, who decided that 'the church ought to give way—that the custom of the several parishes, when destitute of a minister, had been to supply the pulpit by a committee chosen by the whole parish.' The church would not listen to the advice of this council, proceeded to call a minister of their own new opinions, and actually ordained him against the wishes of a majority of the people! The people however did not submit to this usurpation, but proceeded to choose and settle a minister of their own opinions. Thus, there must have been two councils, at least, in the middle of the last century, who declared the right of election to be in the people.

If the members of the Groton Council had read through the '*Ratio Disciplina*' of Cotton Mather, which they quote with respect, they would have found that even that zealous stickler for church authority, admitted that in his time, the early part of the last century, great discontents prevailed at the concurrent power of the church. 'Though,' says he, 'the law of the Province about choosing and settling a minister be a very wholesome law, and has much of the gospel in it, yet there grows too much upon the inhabitants who are not yet come into the communion, a disposition to supersede it and overrule it. Many people would not allow the church any privilege to go before them in the choice of a pastor. The clamor is, "We must maintain him;"'—and a most reasonable clamor it was. These discontents kept increasing, the church prudently yielding to a storm, which they could not resist, until the formation of a Constitution in 1780, furnished a fit opportunity to settle the right, in conformity with that fundamental principle of civil liberty, that '*taxation and representation or the right of voting, are inseparable.*' This was the great principle of our revolution, and involves an *inalienable* right. The Groton Result would have been much more correct, if, instead of saying, that the claim of the church was *uninterrupted* from 1695 to 1780, it had alleged that it *never* had been for one hour *undisputed*.

We shall give another example of inaccuracy, which is so truly ludicrous, that we should not be credited, if we did not exhibit it in their own words. Finding that the terms of the Constitution are clear and unambiguous, they felt it to be necessary to show, that churches were *corporate* bodies, and therefore within the provision of the Constitution. This position

they sustain in a manner peculiar to themselves. But there was one insuperable difficulty in their way, viz. the statute of 1754 incorporating the *deacons*, since revised, February 20, 1786. They endeavour to evade the irresistible force of this statute, by a course of reasoning which we think unique, and would recommend as a model to any writers, who may be hard pressed by arguments which they cannot answer.

'The language of the law of 1754 *implies*, that the churches were corporations before, and was intended to *confirm rights*, which had come into doubt only by a change of circumstances, rendering technical accuracy more necessary. It is entitled an act for the "better securing grants and donations to pious uses," and is as follows: "Whereas many grants and donations have heretofore been made, by sundry well disposed persons, and in such expressions and terms as plainly show it was the intent and expectation of such grantors and donors, that their several grants and donations should take effect, so that the estates granted should go in succession; but doubts having arisen, in what *cases* such donations and grants may operate, so as to go in succession; for ascertaining whereof, Be it enacted, that the *deacons* of all Protestant churches shall be deemed *so far* bodies corporate, as to take, in succession, all grants and donations."—p. 34.

Upon this slender foundation are assumed the following extraordinary positions.

1st. 'This act implies the *preexistence*, in *reality*, of corporate powers in the churches.'—Ibid.

Answer. It implies precisely the *reverse*. Such an inference is precluded by it. If churches had been corporate bodies, the act would have been superfluous.

2d. 'It says that property had been given to them intended to go in succession.'—Ibid.

Answer. It says no such thing. Churches are not even mentioned in the preamble.

3d. 'That some doubts had arisen concerning the corporate powers of the churches, implying that *once there were no doubts* on the subject, and to preclude these *modern* doubts in the shortest and most effectual manner, they make these powers *certain*, by an act of incorporation.'—Ibid.

Answer. They do not say that there were any doubts about the *corporate powers* of the churches but in '*what cases* grants and donations may *operate*'; and they then proceed to put an effectual end to all doubts as to the corporate powers of

the churches; *they decline to grant to the churches any such powers*, but incorporate the 'deacons,' with great caution, 'so far, as to take in succession all grants and donations.'

Throughout all the residue of the Result, the Council speak of the act of 1754 as having incorporated the churches! What can you say to such reasoners? Will the gentlemen contend that the right of election of pastors is given to the *deacons* by the Constitution, they being the only body politic in the church? It has been supposed that this Result was submitted to Orthodox counsel, men learned in the law. This blunder about the act of 1754, proves that this could not have been the fact.

It had been laid down by the Supreme Judicial Court, that 'the only circumstance which gives a church *any legal* character, is its *connexion* with some legally constituted society, and those who withdraw from the society cease to be members of that particular church, and the *remaining members* continue to be the *identical* church.' This opinion every lawyer will at once admit to be correct. Our Council, however, contradict this opinion. They say, 'that though the churches of Massachusetts have in fact existed within the limits of a town or parish, — it *may not be true*, that the legal existence of the church depended on *her civil location* within some town or parish. There is no such condition expressed in the ancient laws, and the historical evidence leads to a conclusion directly the reverse of this.' They then proceed to present a confused idea of what they mean by this separate existence of the church. They appear to think the church an ambulatory body, capable of locomotion, and separable from all other human society. But if they had perused with care the act of 1800, which they quote, they would have seen that the privileges and liberties therein secured to the several churches were thus confirmed *only to such churches 'as are connected and associated in public worship* with the several towns, parishes, precincts, districts, bodies politic, being religious societies, established according to law, within this commonwealth.' Our laws recognise and sustain no others. Our churches are, and always *de facto* and *de jure* have been thus associated. If a church should remove out of a parish, or cease to worship with the parish, their legal existence would cease. They could not take the pastor with them. His contract is with the parish. He could not recover his salary, either of the parish, or the church. The church thus separated could no longer vote on

parish affairs. Church members removing out of the parish lose also their right of voting. They who remain are the only true church.—These principles, will not be controverted by any sound lawyer.

We now proceed to consider a part of this Result, which is of a more grave character, and which will demand from the Council some public explanation. At the close of their argument on the real intent and meaning of the third article of the Bill of Rights, they say, that the construction given to this article by the courts,

‘is not a “*fundamental expression of the public will*,” and that the *freemen*, who adopted the constitution, had *no conception* of its alleged *hidden import*. Indeed,’ say they, ‘there is a tradition, that the *first legal expounder* of the third article said, soon after having given his first exposition of it, “That when it was framed, he believed it would come to this, though he had not expected it would be in his day; and that the people did not understand the article when it was adopted; and if they had, they would as soon have voted in a hierarchy.”’—p. 53.

This is a most serious attack on the integrity, and understanding of Chief Justice Parsons. We believe it to be wholly a fabrication intended to impose on the credulity of these venerable strangers. We think moreover, that prudence and delicacy towards the memory of that great man, should have induced the Council to require some better evidence in the case than ‘tradition.’ The story is as absurd as the calumny is atrocious. Chief Justice Parsons was one of the youngest members of the Convention for framing the Constitution. The committee appointed to draw up the Constitution was numerous. The Convention adjourned for some months to give full time to prepare it. The committee met daily in Boston and discussed every topic with the greatest caution. The third article received more attention than any one. Upon that committee were, if we recollect rightly, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Caleb Strong, James Bowdoin, and many other eminent statesmen. When their report was made to the Convention, every part of the Constitution was fully examined. Nearly the whole people were then Orthodox. The Constitution was in the hands of the people for some time before the period of voting upon its acceptance. Is it possible, that the orthodox Caleb Strong,* and Samuel Adams, the pillar of the Old South, a man of rare

* The third article, it has always been reported, was drawn up by Caleb Strong.

sagacity, and all the other astute men in the Convention, could not perceive the *hidden* meaning of the *simplest* sentence in the Constitution? Why did they not insert the word 'churches,' instead of the words 'religious societies,' which last is strictly technical, and used as such in all the acts of incorporation before and since? Or why did they not insert a saving *proviso* 'reserving to the several churches their usual and accustomed *right of concurrence*?' It cannot possibly be explained but upon the ground that they intended to settle the right of election, for ever, on those who support the teacher.—We shall have occasion to revert to this subject in the close.

There is another criminating imputation to which we beg the attention of our readers. In the year 1800, a bill was brought in and passed for the support of religious worship. That act adopted the same construction, which was afterwards given by the Supreme Judicial Court, with regard to the exclusive right of the whole parish to elect their pastors. The language of the act is, 'that the churches shall have, use, exercise and enjoy, all their accustomed privileges and liberties, respecting divine worship, church order, and discipline, *not repugnant to the Constitution.*' But, as this law passed some time before the Court had occasion to pronounce its decision on the meaning of the clause in the Bill of Rights, the Council at Groton unadvisedly undertake to affirm, what it is absolutely impossible they could know, that, at that time, 'it had never been whispered or dreamed, that the Constitution had "*impaired*" the rights of the churches or "*enlarged those of towns,*"'—according to the words of Chief Justice Parsons. They proceed: 'The understanding of the law of 1800 could, therefore, be none other than that the churches should continue to enjoy, under the protection of the law, all the rights, which they had been accustomed to enjoy. He [the capitals and Italics are their own,] who subjoined the phrase "*not repugnant to the Constitution,*" knew, doubtless, what *he* meant by it, but even *he* would not, at that time, have dared to tell the people.'

Here again we have another unprincipled coward brought upon the stage. Who '*he*' was, we are not told. It was however some artful, intriguing man, who held the understandings of the legislature in utter contempt, and, the Council seem to think, deservedly; for they did not know, as the Council pretend, what was the purport of a very plain clause in their own act. Who was this second culprit,—for it must have been a second?

Having had some connexion with the legislature of 1800, we are satisfied that it was not Chief Justice Parsons ; that he was not a member. We believe that the father of this bill was Enoch Titcomb, *a deacon of a church*. Samuel Phillips of Andover, one of the founders of the Theological School, and many other eminently Orthodox gentlemen, were in the Senate at the time of the passage of that act.—Why could not the venerable Council have favored us with their own views, as to the meaning of this exception? When we look into the constitution, with minds not disposed to find a Jesuitical trick in every thing, not prone to the habit of suspecting others of base and dishonorable intrigues, we must own, that we can see no part of the Constitution to which this exception could possibly apply, but that relating to the *right of election*. The Constitution does not ‘impair’ or restrain the rights and privileges of the churches in any other respect than this. It must therefore be presumed that this exception referred to this particular feature of the Constitution ; and if so, there was a legislative construction of it, several years before the decision of Chief Justice Parsons, and in entire conformity with his opinions.

We are much indebted to the reverend Council for bringing this statute of 1800 to our recollection. We considered the law so settled, the habits of Massachusetts so naturally lead us to respect our courts of law, that we had suffered it to escape us. By what unhappy accident the Council at Groton drew it into notice, we are unable to say. All we can affirm is, that it is entirely fatal to all their pretensions, and takes away the whole effect of a heavy mass of eloquence.

By the first section of the act of 1800, no privileges are given to churches except such as are *connected* and *associated with* existing bodies politic. By the second section, all the towns, parishes, precincts, bodies politic, or *religious societies*, are held to be constantly provided with a public teacher of piety, religion, and morality, under certain penalties to be recovered by indictment. Surely it will not even be pretended, that both the religious societies and the parishes, and also the churches attached to them are liable to these fines ! If this should be the case, there would be a double set of fines ; a fine on the parish as a corporation, and an equal fine on the *included* corporation, as the Council consider it, the church. For, if the churches are incorporated societies, and within the pro-

vision of the Constitution, as 'religious societies' they are entitled to elect; *e converso*, as religious societies, they are liable to this penalty and subject to indictment. The rights and responsibilities must be reciprocal. Is there a lawyer in the State who would not laugh, till he could laugh no longer, at the indictment of a church—without property, as most churches are, without means of raising the fines,—and at the same time another indictment against the parish for the same offence! It is so absurd that we are ashamed that we have wasted so much time in presenting the thought.

But this is the least important objection. The parishes are liable to a perpetual and increasing fine, renewable every six months, for not electing and providing a religious teacher; and yet, by the construction of this venerable Council, they have not the *power* to do it. A majority even of one, in a church, can deprive the parish of power to fill the vacancy. Nine men, for that was the majority in Groton, could keep that pulpit open for ten years, and yet the parish would be liable to the repetition of the fine every six months! It is clear, then, that the Legislature, in 1800, gave the same construction to the Constitution, which the courts have since done.

By the third section of the act, it is provided, 'that any *contract* made by any town, parish, &c, with any public teacher, who may *by them* respectively *be chosen* for their religious teacher, shall be binding on the *corporation*.' It will not be pretended that the *contract* was ever made by the church, or that it is binding on them. And yet why not, if they are bodies politic in the sense of the Constitution?

By the fourth section, every town, parish, and body politic, or religious society, has a right to *assess taxes* for the support of public worship, &c. Will any man pretend that churches have this power? No. It will not be pretended. The Legislature, in 1800, therefore, did not consider the churches as bodies politic and corporate.

But the conclusive reply to this pretension, will be found in the sixth section of this law, by which all laws providing for the settlement of ministers made *prior* to the Constitution, are expressly repealed. Why repeal the law of 1695 unless *repugnant to the Constitution*? Let the construction adopted by the Supreme Judicial Court be right or wrong, this repeal has annihilated the pretensions of the churches. The property of the church was preserved by the act of 1754,

incorporating the deacons. But the privilege of election depended solely on legislative discretion. The power which gave it, not to a corporate body, but to individuals, had surely a right to resume it. They have done it. There are no longer any exclusive privileges in church members.

We shall now make a few remarks on the three grounds taken by the Council.

The first point they assume is, that the church, in their narrow sense of the term, was *instituted by Jesus Christ himself*; that he gave her the right to elect her own pastors; that the church in the early ages was composed only of *covenant members*; that our ancestors so considered its rights, and character; in short, that there is a rightful permanent despotism in the church; for such must be the effect, since not only the rules of admission are made by the church, but the church members have an arbitrary power of rejecting an applicant on any pretext or no pretext at all, and are not responsible for such rejection. Indeed they would in all the eminently Orthodox churches, reject an applicant for the meritorious offence of thinking for himself; for making his own creed; for refusing assent and subscription to a covenant containing sentiments which he cannot find in his bible.

This question is rendered of very little moment, since the repeated judicial constructions which have been put on the third article of the Bill of Rights; but we shall not pass it by without remarking, that there is something revolting to the feelings to see our Saviour's name cited to support a gross abuse. With the bible in our hands, we know that it contains no directions of our Saviour whatever, about the form of his church, no rules or limitations for the admission of members, and that he was wholly silent as to the choice of pastors, or the persons who should choose them. All these matters rest on tradition.

But we forbear an examination of this question, now immaterial, and refer our readers to a discussion of it in a review of the Dedham case in the Christian Disciple for July and August, 1820. They will there find it maintained, that in the early ages of Christianity, the church was the society of Christians worshipping in one place;—that in this, the usual acceptation of the word, the church was divided into two classes only, clergy and laity,—not into three, clergy, church members,

and ordinary worshippers ;—that church and parish were in the language of those times, convertible terms ;—that the *choice of bishops, or presbyters*—one and the same thing,—that is *pastors, was made in a meeting of all the people* ;—that even if it could be proved, that no persons were in the first centuries admitted to the church without entering into a special covenant, it would by no means follow, that such a course is necessary in the present age, which is of a very different character ; nay, that Hooker himself, one of this Council's favorite authorities, maintains that the children of confederate parents are, *ipso facto*, ' *true members* according to the rule of the gospel, by the profession of their *fathers' covenant*, *THOUGH they should not make any personal and vocal expression of their engagement* as their fathers did ;'—that, instead of a constant succession of churches, in the sense in which that word is used by Congregationalists, *the church in our technical sense* never had an existence, till the separation of the Independents from the Presbyterians in the seventeenth century ; and that the high pretensions of churches in regard to the election of pastors, are so far from being supported by an uninterrupted usage even for the last two centuries, that they have never been fully recognised for a single hour. But if it had been otherwise, we maintain, that no length of time however great, can give a prescriptive right to usurpation. The reformation proceeded wholly on this principle. Equality in the christian church is one of its fundamental principles. It is to be sure, one which has been more often violated than any other. There has been an unceasing effort to lord it over God's heritage, and this Result is but one of the latest of the million of efforts to this effect. But it comes in an inauspicious age for the spirit of domination. Popes and Jesuits may be restored in name, but not to their dangerous power. The glory has departed from them. The human mind is free, and men will no longer, except in distracted Spain, hail their despots as benefactors, and insist upon the restoration of their chains.

There are two grounds of a legal nature taken in the Result, which are new. They are pretensions, which escaped the notice of all the legal and public characters, who have been employed in examining this question. It is rather curious that these points of law should never have occurred to the counsel

* Hooker's Survey, Part I. p. 48.

in the three decided cases on the rights of churches, or to the learned judges, or to the Legislature, or to the late Convention, when they were discussing the third article, and yet that Drs Beecher and Porter, strangers to our laws, should have discovered them at a glance. The clause in the Bill of Rights which restores definitively to the parish, to the people, the exercise of inalienable rights of which they had been forcibly deprived, was expressed in these terms ; ' that the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies politic, or religious societies, shall, *at all times*, have the *exclusive* right of electing their public teachers, and of *contracting* with them for their support.' This clause is intelligible, unambiguous, positive, and peremptory ; and it is of great importance, that we should take notice, that the same bodies which have the right of election, have the power of *contracting* with the pastor elect. No bodies have this power but the *civil* corporations. No church can make a contract. No church ever did make a contract, either before, or after the Constitution was adopted. We may say, *ergo*, the churches were not the bodies to which the right of election was given.

The pretensions of the churches of Massachusetts were gone for ever, unless they could show, that they came within one of the descriptions of that short clause. Towns, parishes, or precincts, they could not pretend to be. No man in Massachusetts was so ignorant, or so bold as to affirm, that either of these descriptive names applied to churches. But at last, forty seven years after the adoption of the Constitution, and about fifteen years after a judicial decision was made upon it, the Council at Groton discover that churches are *corporate bodies* and *religious societies*. In order to show this in a very logical and truly legal manner, they begin by denying that any bodies of men existed in 1780, capable of fulfilling these terms, or which answer to them, but churches. This, if correct, would have some weight. It would not of course make the churches bodies politic ; but as the words must be supposed to have had some meaning, there would have been a color for the pretence, that churches were intended or designed by these words. If the assertion of the Council had been true, it would indeed be very perplexing to us, that Caleb Strong who drew up, and the accurate lawyers who examined, and discussed this article, should have omitted the word '*churches*,' and should have given

to these poverty stricken institutions the power of contracting, when they knew that they had no funds, and no means of raising them ; but we might have bowed with submission to an inevitable construction.

But the assertion, ' that besides towns, parishes, and precincts, there were no other religious societies or bodies politic but the churches,' is a most unhappy mistake, betraying an ignorance at which a Massachusetts' pupil at a country academy would have blushed. Our statute books are full of acts of incorporation of ' religious societies ;'—they were so at the time of the adoption of the Constitution. What were the fourteen religious societies of Boston ? They were neither towns, parishes, nor precincts. They were ' bodies politic or religious societies.' These were their precise technical names, and they exactly correspond to the phrase in the Constitution.

But these learned civilians may say, ' So were the churches too. They were bodies politic and religious societies.' We reply, that neither in law, nor in common language, were they the one or the other. How do they shew that they were bodies politic ? By such a strain as this ; ' Our fathers came hither to preserve the liberties of the church. They would not suffer *her* to depend on the *world*. Incorporations must be *presumed*. They would not have permitted this poor *hand-maid*, the church, to be turned out, without her *shepherd*, among a merciless, infidel, wicked race.' This is the general tone, though not in the precise words of the pamphlet.—We ask these gentlemen, why they did not apply to two or three learned professional men, who are the just pride of Orthodoxy ? These gentlemen would have said to them, '—In Massachusetts we have no corporations by prescription. Our statute law has no chasms. We can find no act incorporating a church. A corporate body can act only by its common seal. We know of no church that has one. We search the registry of deeds for two hundred years ; we can see no deed from any church. We consult the records of the courts ; we find no suits for or against a church. The act of 1754 shows that the churches were not corporations then, and that act did not make them such. Gentlemen, you injure the cause of Orthodoxy by meddling with topics which you do not comprehend. Preserve a discreet silence. Imitate the apostles in a suitable submission to the ruling powers. Set an example of decency

and moderation, and you will gain more proselytes than by a display of zeal without knowledge.' Such would have been the sound advice of these excellent lawyers and citizens.

The last point the Council make, is, that the framers of the Constitution *did not intend* to deprive the church of its former privileges; that the third article was not understood; that the people were deceived. We would remark in answer to these general, declamatory, loose, and inconclusive reasonings, that we have in this State, what *they* may think an odd way of judging of the intentions of legislators; viz. *by their words*. If they are clear, present no doubtful or ambiguous expressions, if they apply to existing and well known institutions, and describe them in a simple and accurate manner, we never resort to fanciful and imaginary suppositions and conjectures. We hold, that if the people are fit to be trusted with power, they must be supposed to be capable of comprehending the *clearest language*.^{*} We know the Orthodox rule is different; *credo quia impossibile est*. But upon the principle we have just stated, we infer, that the people *comprehended* the third article of the Bill of Rights. We infer, that they *knew* of the decisions of the Supreme Court in *Avery vs. Tyringham*, *Burr vs. Sandwich*, and the case of the First Church in Dedham. The Orthodox lawyers certainly knew of them. We infer, therefore, that as these decis-

^{*} The great burden of complaint on the part of Dr Beecher and others, is, that the clause in the Bill of Rights giving the exclusive right of choice to the people, was smuggled through the Convention and not understood. We have taken some pains to ascertain the facts from authentic documents. The Committee who reported the draft of the Constitution, did not introduce this clause. They simply provided by the third article, that parishes and towns should be required to support a religious teacher. When that article was under consideration in the Convention, the representatives of the people inserted the clause as a *proviso*, giving to the people, who were held to pay, the right of electing their teachers. (See the printed report of the Committee published by order of the Convention.) And here we cannot forbear quoting a passage from the Address of the Convention to the People, written by Samuel Adams and signed by James Bowdoin. 'This article,' say they, 'underwent long debates, and took time in proportion to its importance; and we feel ourselves peculiarly happy in being able to inform you, that *though the debates were managed by persons of various denominations*, it was finally agreed upon with much more unanimity than usually takes place in disquisitions of this nature.' Thus carefully prepared and thus commended, they express themselves confident that it would meet with the support of the people. It has met with their support. In the Convention of 1820-21, not a word was uttered against this clause respecting the election of teachers; and we are persuaded that there is not at this moment even an Orthodox parish in the State, which would vote to give up its parochial rights, and surrender its liberties to the church members.

ions were all published before the discussions in the late Convention, as the third article then underwent very full revision, and no man attempted to restore the churches to their usurped powers ; —we infer that the construction of the courts on the third article met with universal approbation. We consider the silence of that Convention equivalent to a confirmation of the exclusive right of the people, who are the contractors and the tax payers, to elect those who are to teach them and their children morality and religion.

We shall not insult the understandings of our readers by replying to, or retorting the sometimes canting, sometimes inflammatory, and sometimes threatening language of this Result. Take a specimen ; it would not have disgraced a midnight meeting in the *Convent des Jacobins*. ‘The reaction which is begun, is but begun ; and if it be terrible now, what will it become when an extended sense of injury shall have roused and united the entire mass of Christians of all denominations, whose rights are placed in jeopardy ?—for of all modes of promoting sectarian views, that of *legislation* and *aggression*, is the most hopeless, in a republican government.’ p. 62. To us, all this is a sealed book, a mystical jargon. We can comprehend nothing of the existing, or the threatened ‘terrible’ reaction, nor of ‘promoting sectarian views by legislative enactment.’ But one thing we do know, and which these gentlemen do as certainly *not* know—that the people of Massachusetts have a natural sagacity and shrewdness, which will at once enable them to appreciate this Result according to its real merit, which, in our opinion, is not such as will entitle its authors to canonization. We feel no apprehension, that our people will, by coaxing or threats, be induced to surrender rights which it cost them one hundred and fifty years of patient but determined efforts to secure.

Since the foregoing review was sent to the press, we have obtained from members of the first and only parish in Groton, a full statement of their side of this case, with copies of the documents which passed between the parties in this affair. We are glad that we were not in possession of these papers when writing the review. There is in the Result of this Council, it would appear from these papers, so remarkable a suppression of material facts ; such a coloring of the whole trans-

action, which the true history will not warrant, that it would have been difficult to have preserved the tone of moderation which such a subject requires.

Our review was designed as an examination of principles, not of the conduct of the parties in Groton. The town of Groton, for it seems there is no second parish, might have been rash, or its measures illegal, and yet the principles of the Result of Dr Beecher, might have been unsound and indefensible, and his arraignment of our highest courts, turbulent and refractory. But from what we have seen, and we have carefully perused every document, we are compelled to say, that in no public transaction, in civil or religious concerns, did we ever meet with greater moderation, a more strict regard to decorum, not to be disturbed by provocation; a closer adherence to legal principles, united with a firm and enlightened determination to vindicate civil and religious liberty, than in the proceedings of the town of Groton, and of its committees. Their temperate and wise conduct is highly honorable to them. These documents should be, and indeed must be submitted to the public. The town of Groton owes it to its own honor, assailed as it has been by this Council. It owes it to the cause of christian liberty.

We shall simply state, what our limits will now alone enable us to do, that this Council was not only an *ex parte* one; but a *mutual* one was never asked. This is a direct violation of the Cambridge Platform, and of the order of church discipline;—a pretty singular measure on the part of gentlemen who profess so high a veneration for the usages of our ancestors. The town were not notified of it, nor were they represented at it.

The point in dispute, we are happy to see by the papers, was brought simply to this; Shall a parish once Orthodox, and changing its opinions in the proportion of three to one, be compelled to settle an Orthodox preacher? This was the Groton case stripped of all the disguise thrown around it.

ART. VI.—*Seventeen Discourses on several Texts of Scripture ; addressed to Christian Assemblies in Villages near Cambridge ; to which are added six Morning Exercises.* By ROBERT ROBINSON. First American Edition. Boston, Cummings, Hilliard, and Co. 12mo. pp. 406.

ROBERT ROBINSON was an extraordinary man. He was remarkable for the changes of his life ; for his genius ; for his native, vigorous, but somewhat undisciplined powers of mind ; for his unwearied activity in different occupations wholly unlike each other ; for his strong, benevolent, unrefined virtues, a little tinctured with vanity ; for his excellent, though imperfect views of true religion, and what constitutes the character of a Christian ; for the real pleasure which it gave him to manifest his hearty contempt of all the various classes of pretenders, who elect themselves to constitute the world's aristocracy of saints ; for the keen relish with which he was disposed to pull off and pull to pieces sanctimonious affectation, hypocrisy, pretension, and parade ; and for a corresponding independence of character in all things, which often shot out into eccentricities, half natural, half a matter of ostentation. In his own day, we believe, he had no rival as an eloquent extempore preacher, with power to command the attention, equally of the refined and the most uncultivated. In the society of Baptists at Cambridge, which he may almost be said to have formed, his successor has been the famous Robert Hall, a man apparently with greater advantages of education, and a more finished writer, but not his superior in native powers, and not his equal in liberality of feeling, and just conceptions of religion.

Robinson forced his way upward to distinction under very unfavorable circumstances. He was born in 1735. His father, who held an office in the excise, was a worthless profligate. He ill treated his wife, who had been led to marry him against her father's consent, partly from the unkindness which she experienced at home. He died when his son Robert, the youngest of three children, was about seven years old, leaving his family in distress through poverty. Of the two other children, one, a son, had been apprenticed to a painter, and the other, a daughter, to a mantuamaker. Robert was sent to a Latin school when six years old, where he recommended himself to the master by his abilities and good conduct, and made

some proficiency in the classical languages. He likewise acquired a knowledge of the French, which he was enabled to do the more readily, as the French usher lodged at his mother's house. When he was fourteen, however, the poverty of his mother compelled her to take him from school, and endeavour to procure him some employment. An attempt to obtain a more desirable situation having failed, he was bound apprentice to a hairdresser in London, who had offered to receive him without a premium.

During his apprenticeship, he rose at four or five in the morning to study, procuring old books from stalls. He was tolerably attentive to his trade, and strictly virtuous in his conduct. His mind was much occupied by religious topics, and he was fond of attending a variety of preachers among the different sects of the Calvinistic Dissenters. But he was particularly attached to Whitfield, whom he used to call his spiritual father; and on leaving his trade, when he was about twenty years of age, he commenced preaching among the Methodists, which he continued for about two years.

During his apprenticeship, and afterward, he kept a regular diary, which sufficiently proves his religious simplicity. In one place, he says: 'I think this day our dear king is seventyfour years of age. O! my soul, bless God for the liberty we enjoy under his mild and gentle reign. Lord bless him with the choicest of thy blessings, spiritual and temporal! I went to the monthly meeting at Mr Halls' and found it was good to be there. A good man in his own hair from Deptford prayed first; then old Mr Crookshanks preached a sweet sermon, very awakening, from Hebrews xi, 7—the oldest preachers are the most thundering of late. God prosper them. Mr Hitchin prayed next very sweetly; then Mr Conder dismissed us with an affecting prayer. Lord hear us for this sinful land.' From the mention of the age of George II, this appears to have been written after he was twenty years old. In the following extract, the conception expressed of the piety of Frederick the Great and the Prussian army, is somewhat startling: 'As the Lord has been pleased so signally to own and bless the Prussian arms, (having on the fifth of November, when many I trust were praying for them, enabled him with about 1700 men,* to conquer an army of French and Austrians of 60 or

* This is the number given in the volume before us; but Robinson probably wrote 17,000, which would be near the truth. He refers to the battle of Rosbach fought the fifth of November, 1757.

70,000 : the Lord stirred up the king of Prussia and his soldiers to pray ; they kept up three fast days, and spent about an hour praying and singing psalms before they engaged the enemy : O how good it is to pray and fight !) we kept this day at the tabernacle,' &c.

Such characteristics of an individual like Robinson ought not to be kept out of sight. It is only with those who look but on the surface of things, that they can injure his fame, or affect the influence of what is excellent in his character and writings. They are highly instructive. It is a very remarkable fact, and a decisive proof of the original strength of Robinson's mind, that from being an apprentice to a hairdresser, and the author of such a diary, he rose to be one of the eminent men of his age, a keen and vigorous writer, and a most eloquent and powerful preacher. We learn from his diary, how different are the forms which the mind may assume at different periods of life. Nor is this the only, nor the most important lesson which it teaches. It may instruct us, when disposed to regard such extravagancies as it presents, only with ridicule, that they are not merely consistent with sincere piety, but that they may be the errors of a mind gifted with natural powers far beyond the common lot.

While he was preaching among the Methodists, he had an opportunity of giving proof of his christian integrity. A rich relation who had promised to provide liberally for him, and had bequeathed him a considerable sum in his will, threatened to withdraw his favor altogether, unless he quitted the Dissenters. The threat was unavailing ; Robinson persevered in what he believed his duty, and suffered the forfeit. Soon after, he became a Baptist ; and in the year 1759, when he was twenty-three years of age, began to preach to a small congregation of Baptists at Cambridge, with which he remained connected during the rest of his life. While yet among the Methodists, though almost without means of support, he had married. His wife's maiden name was Ellen Payne.

After preaching to his congregation for two years, he was regularly settled as their pastor in 1761. He had then, as he himself informs us, no prospect of assistance from his family. His wife's fortune, originally a hundred pounds, was partly gone. He had never inquired what his congregation would allow him, nor had any body proposed any thing. Their numbers, it is said, were only thirtyfour, and most of them were poor villa-

gers. They had been quarrelling together about the question of free communion; and the libertinism of many of the former members had given a bad character to the whole society. They paid their future pastor for the first year that he was with them, three pounds twelve shillings and five pence. 'We lived,' he says, 'in bare walls, and they fit to tumble about our ears.' His salary however gradually increased, till in 1770, with nine young children, a wife, and an aged mother to support, he received ninety pounds, a sum which at that time was far from being equal in value to forty pounds when the Deserted Village was flourishing.

But 'the love of his people,' he says, 'was worth a million.' For them and for his family he labored without respite. He was constant in his attentions to them, particularly to the poor and to children. Of the latter he used to say, 'that if a child but lisped to give you pleasure, you ought to be pleased.' He preached extempore twice, and occasionally three times, on the sabbath; and delivered several lectures during the week among his scattered congregation, preaching sometimes in barns, and sometimes in the open air. He took the hours before they had commenced, or after they had ended the labors of the day,—the evening, or the early morning, and intermitted his lectures in hay and harvest times. But these were not his only labors. The sum which he received from his people being so inadequate to his support, he was obliged to provide necessaries and comforts for his family by other means. He accordingly engaged in agriculture, first renting some land, then purchasing it, and afterwards making additional purchases, till he became a busy, successful, thrifty farmer. There is a long letter written in gay spirits, in which he describes, evidently with a little exaggeration, the multiplicity of labors and duties that came upon him in one day, in the latter part of May, 1784. He thus relates his occupations before breakfast. 'Rose at three o'clock—crawled into the library—and met one who said, "Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light—the night cometh when no man can work—my father worketh hitherto, and I work."—Rang the great bell, and roused the girls to milking—went up to the farm, roused the horse-keeper—fed the horses while he was getting up—called the boy to suckle the calves, and clean out the cow-house—lighted the pipe, walked round the gardens to see what was wanting there—went up to the paddock to see if the weanling calves were

well—went down to the ferry, to see whether the boy had scooped and cleaned the boats—returned to the farm—examined the shoulders, heels, traces, chaff, and corn of eight horses going to plough—mended the acre staff—cut some thongs, whip-corded the boys' plough whips—pumped the troughs full—saw the hogs fed—examined the swill-tubs, and then the cellar—ordered a quarter of malt, for the hogs want grains, and the men want beer—filled the pipe again, returned to the river, and bought a lighter of turf for dairy-fires, and another of sedge for ovens—hunted up the wheelbarrows and set them a trundling—returned to the farm, called the men to breakfast, and cut the boys' bread and cheese, and saw the wooden bottles filled—sent one plough to the three-roods, another to the three-half-acres, and so on,—shut the gates, and the clock struck five—breakfasted.' The remainder of the letter is in the same style. In another, written in 1772, he says that he is attending his wife for the tenth time in childbirth; 'three nights I have sat up, and what with the fatigue of overseeing so great a family, where one is old, another sick, and all, as it were, past help, or not arrived at it; what with public labors and a variety of *et ceteras*, I am now fit to sleep on the floor.' In a letter written apparently a few days later, after mentioning the encouraging prospect of his wife's recovery, he says; 'I have had a fine week, you must think, nurses, helps, &c. to the number of seventeen or nineteen in a day with my own family; and I, poor I, all day forced to find eyes and feet, and thought for all.'

But it was not merely for himself and his family that he thus labored. Robinson was an eminently charitable and hospitable man, always ready to communicate from his own means, such as they were, to relieve the necessities and add to the comforts of others. In this particular, the sentiments expressed in one of his letters, were those on which he acted. In the original they are blended with some reflections on the vanity of learning in a christian preacher, which he himself, we are confident, would, if called upon, have explained away and limited, till we should have differed from him but little or not at all; but which, as they stand, are expressed much too broadly and loosely. We mention this in order to explain the allusions to the same subject in the extract given. 'I feel,' he says, 'three pounds, gained honestly by the sale of a fat bullock, produce more fire in my spirit, than all those pretty, but poor tassels

and spangles, can give me. With three pounds I can set fire to ten cold hearts frozen with infirmity and widowhood, poverty and fear. Half a guinea will purchase the native eloquence of a grateful old woman; and she, if I set her to read, will give me a criticism of the heart, and the finest reading in the world. Oh! bless the old soul! what honied accents she pours into my ear! If I can honestly get, and afford to give away three pounds, it will always be my own fault if I be not very happy. Now then set me to preach. How is it possible I should be dull! The luxury of living to the glory of God, and the good of society; the joy of having saved a forlorn and forgotten cripple from hanging herself in despair; the felicity of setting fire to incense that burns to the glory of God; these are preparations of the pulpit, which the cold consumer of midnight oil never derives from his accents and quantities.'

But, notwithstanding the pressure of all his other occupations, such was the untiring activity of Robinson's mind, and such too, it must be added, was the uncommon vigor and elasticity of his animal frame, that he was able, in 1770, to commence a distinguished literary career which terminated only with his life. To explain in some degree his marvellous industry and the versatility of his powers, it must be remarked that his health was always firm, and that he enjoyed an almost boyish lightness and alacrity of spirits till the last year or two of his life, when his constitution gave way, in consequence of excessive exertions, and his confining himself too much to merely intellectual pursuits. Like other strong men, he was too confident in his strength. 'I have but one nerve,' he used to say, 'and that comes from my breeches pocket.'

In 1770 he commenced his well known translation of Saurin's sermons, the first volume of which was published in 1775. The several volumes contain valuable preliminary matter on different subjects. In 1774, he published his '*Arcana*; or the Principles of the late Petitioners to Parliament in the Matter of Subscription.' It has the reputation of being one of the most able works which have appeared on the subject. Its immediate occasion was this. In 1772 a petition was presented to parliament by members of the church of England, principally clergymen, but including, likewise, members of the professions of civil law and physic, praying for relief in the matter of subscription to the thirtynine articles. It failed of its object, by a great majority in the house of commons; as did a motion to

the same effect the following year. In 1772, likewise, a bill was introduced for the relief of the Dissenters, whose clergymen and schoolmasters were, and we believe are, *legally* exposed to heavy penalties if they undertake their offices, without subscribing all the *doctrinal* articles of the church of England. Though it passed the house of commons, by a great majority, it was thrown out in the house of lords; all the bishops, with one honorable exception, Green, bishop of Lincoln, who was never afterwards translated, voting against it. The same was the fate of a similar bill the following year. These subjects excited great attention. Among the members of the church of England who interested themselves in the cause of religious freedom, the most distinguished were Lindsey, Robert Tyrwhitt, then fellow of Jesus College, Dr John Jebb, bishop Law, and, we regret to add, Paley. The Defence which he published about this time of the Considerations of his patron, bishop Law, only increases the sorrow, with which an honest man must read the poor sophistry in respect to subscription, with which he afterward paltered with his own conscience, and taught others to do the same.

We happen to be writing with the '*Arcana*' on the table before us; and in taking it up, the first passage on which we open, is so characteristic of Robinson's style as to be worth quoting. The book is written in the form of letters. Addressing his correspondent he says; 'You know the story of father Fulgentio, preaching at Venice on Pilate's question, *What is truth?* He told his hearers that at last, after many searches, he had found it out, and held out a New Testament, and said that there it was in his hand; but then he put it in his pocket, and coldly said; *But the book is prohibited.* Now what great difference would there have been, if he had said, *You may read the book, but its true meaning is prohibited?* Yet this is what all the Arminian clergy in England must say, if they speak consistently with themselves; for in the opinion of all impartial judges, the established religion is Calvinism.'

Robinson was a thoroughly *catholic* Christian, and an enemy of intolerance in all its forms. He regarded in the true spirit of our religion all attempts of sects and churches, of Episcopalians or Baptists, to impose the subscription or the profession of their creeds upon others, by holding out bribes in the one hand, and inflicting penalties and disabilities with the other. He was a sincere and enlightened lover of liberty religious and

civil. He admired the American constitution, and regarded the character of Washington with the veneration to which it is entitled. His fame early extended to our country ; and in one of his letters, he speaks, in a tone of exhilaration, of a visit from some distinguished Americans. He was invited by them to remove and settle among us. 'Happiest of countries,' says he, 'peace and prosperity attend you ! I shall never see you ; but if I forget the ability and virtue, that struggled to obtain, and actually did obtain, all that mankind hold dear ; let my right hand forget her cunning.'

We cannot transcribe these words without feeling that in this country, the contest is to be won or lost, on which the hopes of mankind depend. If the clouds which have broken away in the heavens, and let down upon us a clear sunshine, unknown before, should close again, no human foresight can determine the continuance of the gloom and storms, that will follow. We seem, however, not to be fully aware, that as the highest earthly blessings cannot be obtained, so they cannot be secured without unremitting and strenuous exertions. Of late, we hear, especially from ourselves, too much of our national praises, and too little of our duties and responsibilities. At one period, it was necessary in order to produce a proper feeling of patriotism and gratitude, that we should be reminded of our distinctions ; but of late, national flattery, mingled with falsehood, has been administered in too much abundance ; in draughts adapted to intoxicate or to sicken. Such flattery may be as pernicious to a people, as to a monarch ; and is commonly offered with the same selfish purposes to the one as to the other. We need those who will warn, and counsel, and exhort. A republic is in continual danger. There is no season of idleness or indifference for those who wish well to their country, their children, or mankind. As regards our national government, there is always danger of the existence of an unprincipled opposition, loving intrigue for its own sake ; and having no object but the gratification of private ambition in its meanest forms ; but restless, cunning, working its way steadily ; and silent or clamorous in its operations as occasion may require. Such an opposition may embarrass government, defeat the most important measures, and consume the time of our public councils in noisy and endless harangues, and the discussion of questions brought forward only as part of the hostile machinery of a faction. Its members may even labor to dishonor their country in the adop-

tion of public measures, for the sake of bringing discredit on those who are at the head of affairs. Taking advantage of pernicious prejudices, false principles, wrong sentiments, and corrupt passions, they may countenance and strengthen them; deceiving, misleading, and, as far as it is in their power, perverting the moral sense of all that portion of the community over which they can gain influence. To these dangers is our general government exposed; nor is any one of our confederated republics secure in its present prosperity. We speak on these subjects merely with the feeling of Christians and of moral men. As for the names of party distinction, no one can regard them with more indifference than we do. In addressing Unitarian Christians, we consider ourselves as addressing a very enlightened portion of the community, and especially as addressing men, who understand well, that true religion exercises its unrelaxing authority over every act that may affect the condition of our country or our fellow men.

We return from what is hardly a digression. In reading the lives of those in our own times, who have felt and written like philosophers and Christians, we cannot but observe with what an earnest gaze their attention has been turned to America. The recollection of what has interested them most deeply in the progress of human improvement, necessarily awakens all our hopes and solitudes for our native land. Its fate becomes blended with their history.

Robinson was, as we have said, a thoroughly catholic Christian; and this fact alone implies that he had just notions of what is essential in religion; and attached no extravagant importance to any of those false doctrines, the reception of which others have made the necessary condition of escaping everlasting misery. Educated as a Calvinist, under such preachers as Gill and Whitfield, his belief was through life gradually changing, and becoming clear and rational. Upon the occasion, however, of Mr Lindsey's publishing his celebrated *Apology for Resigning the Vicarage of Catterick*, he came forward as a defender of the proposition, that 'Jesus Christ is truly and properly God,' in a work, entitled '*A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' In what sense he maintained this proposition, the reader of his *Plea* may probably think that he himself would have found some difficulty in distinctly explaining. He writes with great candor, and with much respect for the integrity of his opponents. His work was thought very able by

those who ought to be best qualified to judge of its merit ; and his services were very thankfully acknowledged, not merely by Dissenters, but by dignitaries of the establishment. Proposals were made to him to accept a situation in the church, but of course were rejected. 'Do the Dissenters know the worth of the man?' asked Dr Ogden. 'The man,' said Robinson, 'knows the worth of the Dissenters.'

On many topics of controversial theology his opinions seem, during much of his life, to have been loose and unsettled. In discussing them with his brother ministers, he sometimes treated such subjects with what seemed to them levity and sinful indifference. On one occasion he said, for instance, 'Brother, I have delivered my present sentiments ; but I am going to feed the swans at the bottom of my garden ; on my return, perhaps I shall think differently.' He had a habit very provoking in addressing another who is possessed with a solemn sense of the orthodoxy and importance of his opinions. He would gravely ask such a one to give a clear account of his belief. 'Brother,' he would say, 'explain the matter ; when I understand the subject, I will preach about it.' His own orthodoxy respecting the trinity, which, at the time when he wrote his *Plea*, would not have stood any severe test, gradually melted away. In a letter written in 1788, two years before his death, he thus expressed himself ; 'As to personality in God, a trinity of persons, I think it the most absurd of all absurdities ; and in my opinion, a man who hath brought himself to believe the popular doctrine of the trinity, hath done all his work ; for after that, there can be nothing hard, nothing inevident, the more unintelligible, the more credible.' It is remarkable that one commencing life as Robinson did, should have died as a guest of Dr Priestley, from an interview with whom he had expected much gratification ; and that the first honors to his memory should have been paid in a funeral sermon by that eminent man.

Besides the works of Robinson, which have been mentioned, his translation of Claude's *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon* is well known. There are others which attracted much attention at the time of their publication, and passed through repeated editions. They may be read at the present day with interest and instruction. One of them is a '*Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non Conformity*.' It is a strong, able, undisguised attack upon the church of England. Another

is entitled, 'A political Catechism intended to convey, in a familiar Manner, just Ideas of good Civil Government, and the British Constitution.' In the advertisement, he says, it is the duty of all good citizens, 'to support the present excellent administration,' which was the Rockingham administration. Notwithstanding, however, his attachment to the administration of which Mr Burke was a member, his Plan of Lectures and his Catechism, some years after their publication, when Mr Burke had separated from his party, brought upon Robinson an attack in parliament from that eminent man, which he shared in company with Dr Priestley and Dr Price.* Few can think more highly than we do of the genius and the integrity of Burke. But after all, he was one who 'born for the universe, narrowed his mind;' and became a politician and a partisan, when he ought to have been a philosopher. With the feelings and views of a politician, he was more solicitous to reconcile himself to the existing state of society, to free it from its abuses, and to trim it into shape, than to anticipate or provide for any essential improvement in the condition of our race. He was *ultimus Romanorum*; the greatest among those who lived in a fashion of the world which is passing away.

Robinson's high reputation, his talents and virtues, gave him, at one period, great influence with the denomination to which he belonged. But it was shaken and weakened by his liberality of sentiment, by his resistance of all usurpation over the faith of others, and by his disbelief of many of the articles of the Orthodox creed. In 1781, he published a tract, entitled 'The general Doctrine of Toleration applied to the particular Case of Free Communion.' The proposal of free communion was in itself obnoxious; and Robinson had besides the hardihood to affirm, that 'there is, there can be, no moral turpitude in involuntary error.' The expression of this opinion was regarded as highly offensive, by Mr Abraham Booth, a distinguished Particular Baptist, one Dr Rippon, an eminent man, and others, who, conceiving that they possessed a monopoly of truth in this sinful and ignorant world, were outraged that their peculiar possession should be so undervalued. At some monthly meeting of Baptist ministers, a voice was heard, which may not yet have reached the ears of all whom it is adapted to inform. Mr

* See Annual Register for 1790, pp. 76, 77, and Dyer's life of Robinson, p. 155. There must be an anachronism in the date assigned by Dyer to Mr Burke's attack.

Abraham Booth, as Dr Rippon relates, 'stated with an energy of mind, and a force of argument never to be forgotten, that if error is harmless, truth must be worthless, and with a voice for him unusually elevated, declared, that every partisan of the innocency of mental error is a criminal of no common atrocity, but guilty of high treason against the majesty of eternal truth.' The words of Mr Booth and his admirer may sound to many like an echo of one of the Rev. Gabriel Kittledrumle's sermons in *Old Mortality*; but we are none of us, probably, fully aware of the state of things in which we live; and are apt, it may be, to believe the world wiser than it is. We are much mistaken if as gross folly is not delivered with as much arrogance and dogmatism, and almost as much effect, to congregations in our own metropolis. In the present case, the effect of this and similar denunciations was considerable. Many of his own denomination were led to view Robinson as an object of suspicion; and of its leaders, many without doubt, had before regarded him with jealousy.

Still the weight of his character was such as to withstand, in a great measure, the attacks to which he was exposed. In 1781, a respectable meeting of gentlemen of the Baptist denomination, convened in London for the purpose, applied to him to undertake a history of the Baptists. He assented to their request; and was occupied in literary labors relating to this work during the remainder of his life. The fruits of his studies appeared after his death in two large quarto volumes; the one entitled a *History of Baptism*, and the other, *Ecclesiastical Researches*. These works may be of some use to the student of ecclesiastical history; but they are among the least valuable of his writings. He wanted that long discipline of learning, and those comprehensive views, to be derived only from a very extensive acquaintance with collateral subjects, which are necessary to qualify one for such undertakings. This want, no studies, pursued merely for the particular occasion, can supply. The facts which are learnt by the undisciplined student are often but very imperfectly apprehended. Their true character and bearing are not perceived. He can hardly fail to misjudge as to the proper inferences from them, and he is very liable to mistake and misstate the facts themselves. In order to accomplish well such works as those just mentioned, the mind must be accustomed to critical study, and philosophical investigation; otherwise, we shall find in them loose, partial, exaggerated, false

statements, only conformed in their general outline to what the author may think the truth. These faults are characteristic of Robinson's histories. They are distinguished, likewise, by an occasional levity of style, harsh judgments harshly expressed, and strong and sweeping assertions in coarse language, which, as the author is often in the wrong, give an air of flippancy to his composition. Still a man like him could not write two quarto volumes without affording abundant proof of the vigor of his mind. The amount of labor of which they give evidence is wonderful. It is curious, and may be useful, to perceive in what manner the facts in ecclesiastical history were viewed by one regarding them from the position in which Robinson stood, and expressing himself with so much independence. His remarks may suggest new thoughts. His language is often bold and forcible. To give a single example; after relating the proceedings by which Calvin brought Servetus to the stake, he proceeds; 'Many have pretended to apologize for Calvin; but who is John Calvin, and what are his nostrums, which end in tyranny and murder, that the great voice of nature should be drowned in the din of a vain babbling about him?'

Robinson's devoted attention to his congregation, and particularly to the poor, has been already mentioned, and is one of the very pleasing traits of his character. When preaching in the villages through which they were scattered, he used to take pleasure in visiting his poor parishioners, and partaking, when asked, of their brown bread and black tea. The smallest expression of kindness from them, though it were but lighting his pipe, was gratefully acknowledged. 'When a poor man,' he said, 'shows anxiety to administer to your comfort, do not interrupt him. Why deprive him of the pleasure of expressing his friendship?' He was piously attentive to his mother, who died at a very advanced age, having been long an inmate of his family. He was an affectionate husband and a fond father. He was very kind to his servants, familiar with them, patient with their weaknesses, and possessing the art of governing tempers thought by others to be unmanageable. He used to say that 'nothing so much humanizes the heart as bearing with the infirmities of others.' In his notions of education, he seems to have anticipated principles more generally adopted since his time. 'He rather invited inquiry than imposed tasks.' 'His opinion was that young people recollect longer, what they discover by their own sagacity and observation, than in the way of

formal lessons.' A great part of his house was stuck over with cheap pictures which might serve for their instruction. 'Children,' he said, 'catch their most useful hints in their most unguarded moments.' 'His system however,' we are told, 'inclined to excessive indulgence;' but though the writers of his life say or insinuate this, they afford no proof that any ill effects followed from it. In 1787 he lost a daughter; and it is thus that he speaks of her in a letter to a lady, written about three weeks after her death:—

'You will not be surprised when I inform you, that all our hopes and fears concerning *Julia*, ended in her departure on the evening of the 9th instant. You, I know, foresaw it. For my part I wilfully blinded myself; I could not, I would not believe it could be, but it was and I have felt it, and ever shall feel it. Saturday she seemed better, sat up, gave me a drawing of a moss-rose bud for my watch, and ate two slices of the breast of a goose and some green pease. Lord's day worse. Monday worse still. Tuesday up into an easy chair, and put again to bed more than twenty times in the day, yet she ate a bit of hare for dinner. At seven I gave her a night draught, which she took with eagerness, and said, she would not take any thing more to night, but go to sleep. Presently, she said, Nancy kiss me. Nancy kissed her, and Patty. Reclining her head on the pillow, she added, Lord into thy hands I commend my spirit, and without a struggle, a sigh, a groan, or any unpleasant appearance, fell asleep. Oh! Mrs. T——, the picture is in my mind. I shall never lose it!

Turn hopeless thought, turn from her. Thought repelled,
Resenting rallies, and wakes all my wo.

Julia was the beauty and the pride of all my family. She was straight as an arrow, five feet ten inches high. A dark eye like fire, and an oval visage full of sensibility, and sweetness. A complexion like the lilly tinged with the blush of the rose. She had a fund of sterling wit, and a wise, grave reason that directed the use of it. Nothing escaped her observation, and whether she roved in the regions of fancy, or plodded in the facts of creation and providence, her fine reasoning powers reduced all to truth, arranged all in order, and directed all to make her circle happy. She had the most just and sublime notions of God, and a perpetual veneration for him. No suspicions invaded her serene bosom, during a gradual decline of three years: on the contrary, often would she exclaim, his tender mercies are over all his works! Shall not the judge of the whole earth do right! She had felicity enough to enjoy, and to communicate,

and her sisters who always waited on her, said, father, Jule is an angel! My heart, my aching heart! She was an angel. Ah! too true! She had wings, and flew away. Do dear Mrs. T——, forgive me. It eases me to write to you, for you, I know, share my grief.

* * * * *

How wonderful are God's ways! My mother at ninety, with a complexion and a vivacity proper to seventeen, goes into mourning for seventeen, decrepid, departed, decayed! Mrs Robinson and the family have borne the shock better than could have been imagined. The lot has fallen upon me, and they, in eagerness to comfort me, console themselves.

About the beginning of the year 1790, as he was completing the fiftyfifth year of his age, his health began to give away, under the pressure of his various labors and cares. His body failed, and his mind shared in some degree its weakness. He undertook, for relaxation, a journey to Birmingham to visit Dr Priestley. He retained the sprightliness of his conversation, but he felt that he was an altered man. He said to one who visited him while in that city, 'You have only come to see the shadow of Robert Robinson.' He preached, however, in Dr Priestley's pulpit. The next Tuesday evening he passed in their company, entertaining them with his usual vivacity. He did not fear death; but had always expressed an apprehension of the distress of parting with his family and friends, from the affliction which they must suffer. He died that night, agreeably to a wish which he had expressed, 'sofly, suddenly, and alone.' When he was found in the morning, the bed clothes were not discomposed, nor his countenance distorted.*

The writings of Robinson have a peculiar interest from the fact that they are *his* writings, that his mind with all its power and goodness, and all its inequalities and eccentricities, pervades and gives life to the whole. There is nothing of mere mechanical composition in his pages; nothing but what gives proof of the individual author. But of all his writings the volume which has afforded occasion for this article, is the most curious and interesting. It is the only one, we believe, which has

* The particulars in the preceding account, except where Robinson's own letters are quoted, are principally taken from *Memoirs of his Life and Writings* by George Dyer; and from *Memoirs* [by B. Flower] prefixed to a *Collection of his Miscellaneous Writings* in four Volumes 8vo, Harlow 1807. Neither writer can be much praised; and Dyer, especially, seems to have had little power of comprehending and estimating Robinson's character.

been republished in this country ; and if one alone were to be selected, it deserved the distinction. It consists of sermons which were actually delivered to the humblest of the poor of his congregation ; to men and women, many of whom could not read, sometimes assembled in barns, or in the open air. And these sermons are perfectly adapted to their comprehension ; and at the same time contain an exposition of the great truths and duties of religion so clearly and forcibly given, that he must be a very wise and a very good man, who may not be benefitted by their perusal. In reading them, one may enjoy a pleasure similar to that derived from Miss Edgeworth's stories for children, in perceiving the skill with which a powerful mind accommodates itself to the understandings of the weak and uninformed, while we feel also that the truths conveyed to them, are well suited to our own improvement. The composition of these sermons was the peculiar work for which Robinson was preeminently fitted. They form a volume unique in its character, presenting an exhibition of intellectual power such, we believe, as is not elsewhere to be found. No other sermons with which we are acquainted, approach to them in the characteristic excellencies which ought to distinguish such discourses. We will give a few passages merely as specimens of the style of address. The title of the first sermon is, 'The Christian Religion easy to be understood ;' the text is Ephesians iii. 4. Robinson begins in the following manner.

BRETHREN,—‘ Suppose the apostle Paul, when he first stood up in the synagogue at Ephesus to teach Christianity to the Jews, or in the school of Tyrannus to a mixed assembly, had begun his discourse by saying, “ Men of Ephesus, I am going to teach a religion which none of you can understand ;” I say, suppose this ; put yourselves in the place of the Ephesians, and you must allow, that he would have insulted his hearers, disgraced himself, and misrepresented the religion of Jesus Christ.

‘ He would have *insulted the assembly* ; and they would have thought, This man either doth understand the subject of which he is going to speak, or he doth not. If he doth not understand it himself, he hath gathered us together only to hear him confess his ignorance ; and what have we to do with that ? If he be ignorant, let him sit silent as we do, and give place to such as do know what they talk of. If he does understand it himself,

why should he affirm we cannot? Are we assembled to hear him boast? Does he take us for idiots, who have no reason, or for libertines, who make no use of what they have?

'He would have *disgraced himself*; for what can render a man more ridiculous than his pretending to instruct others in what he doth not understand himself? Paul would have appeared in the pulpit just as one of you, taskers, would appear in the chair of a professor of Hebrew at a university. What character more disgraceful can a man assume, than that of the leader of a credulous party, whose religion doth not lie in understanding and practising what is taught, but in believing that the teacher understands it! A provision indeed for the glorious consequence of a blind guide; but not for the freedom, and piety, and happiness of the people!

'I said, he would have *misrepresented the christian religion*; and I am going to prove this, by showing you, that Christianity is not a secret but a revealed religion—that you are all of you able to understand it—and that there is every reason in the world why you should apply yourselves to the thorough knowledge of it.' pp. 1, 2.

Again;

'When I affirm, the christian religion hath no mysteries now, I do not mean to say that the truths and the duties of Christianity are not *connected* with other truths and other exercises, which surpass all our comprehension; but I affirm, that the knowledge of the incomprehensible parts, and the belief of what people please to conjecture about them, though they may be parts of our amusement, and perhaps improvement, are yet no parts of that religion which God requires of us under pain of his displeasure. Suppose I were to affirm, there is no secret in mowing grass, and in making, stacking, and using hay; all this would be very true; and should any one deny this, and question me about the manner in which one little seed produces clover, another trefoil, a third rye-grass, and concerning the manner how all these convey strength and spirit to horses, and milk to cows, and fat to oxen in the winter; I would reply, All this is philosophy; nothing of this is necessary to mowing, and making, and using hay. I sanctify this thought by applying it to religion. Every good work produces present pleasure and future reward; to perform the work, and to hope for the reward from the known character of the great Master we serve, is religion, and all before and after is only connected with it.' p. 3.

We will give but one more extract from this excellent sermon:

' Another says, I am a very sober man, I go constantly to a place of worship, and I cannot comprehend the christian religion. All this is very true ; you are a sober, decent character, and regular in your attendance on public worship ; but recollect, I am speaking not of your body, but of your mind. Now, it is a fact, abroad or at home, in the church or in the barn, your attention is always taken up with other things, and so taken up as to leave no room for "the things which belong unto your everlasting peace." Sometimes your corn, sometimes your cattle, sometimes taxes and rates, and sometimes your rent and your servants' wages ; but, at all times, to live in the present world, engrosses all your attention. You resemble yon child fast asleep, without knowing it, in the arms of a parent. "God besets you behind and before, and lays his hand upon you. It is he that watereth the ridges of your corn, and setteth the furrows thereof ; he maketh the earth soft with showers ; he clothes thy pastures with flocks, and crowns the year with his goodness. It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, and multiplieth thy herds and thy flocks, and thy silver and thy gold, and all that thou hast." And you, inattentive man ! you cannot comprehend that you are under an obligation to know and do the will of this generous benefactor. What does Christianity require of you but to love and serve this God ? If you do not serve him, it is because you do not love him ; if you do not love him, it is because you do not know him ; and if you do not know him, it is not for want of evidence, but attention.

' It is not only to you that I affirm this connexion between attention and knowledge ; for if this barn were filled with statesmen and scholars, generals and kings, I should be allowed to say to one, Sir, you understand intrigue ; to another, Sir, you understand war, to besiege a town, and rout an army ; to a third, Sir, you understand law, and every branch of the office of a conservator of the peace ; to another, Sir, you understand languages, and arts and sciences ; and you all understand all these, because you have studied them ; but here are two things which you have not studied, and which therefore you do not know ; the one, how to plough, and sow, and reap, and thresh an acre of wheat ; and the other how to live holily in this world, so as to live happily in the world to come. Are you not convinced, my good brethren, that the same circumstance, which prevents those gentlemen from knowing how to perform the work that you perform every day with pleasure, prevents you from knowing the practice and the pleasure of true Christianity ? In both cases the subject has not been attended to.' pp. 5, 6, 7.

In another sermon we find the following statement of the argument for the existence and perfections of God from the works of creation.

‘See here, I hold a Bible in my hand, and you see the cover, the leaves, the letters, and the words; but you do not see the writers or the printers, the letter-founder, the ink-maker, the paper-maker, or the binder. You never did see them, you never will see them, and yet there is not one of you who will think of disputing or denying the being of these men. I go further; I affirm that you see the very souls of these men in seeing this book; and you feel yourselves obliged to allow that they had skill, contrivance, design, memory, fancy, reason, and so on. In the same manner, if you see a picture, you judge there was a painter; if you see a house, you judge there was a builder of it; and if you see one room contrived for this purpose, and another for that; a door to enter, a window to admit light, a chimney to hold fire, you conclude that the builder was a person of skill and forecast, who formed the house with a view to the accommodation of its inhabitants. In this manner examine the world, and pity the man who, when he sees the sign of the wheat-sheaf, has sense enough to know that there is somewhere a joiner, and somewhere a painter; but who, when he sees the wheat-sheaf itself, is so stupid as not to say to himself,—This creature had a wise and good Creator.’ p. 22.

To us there is something quite pleasing in the next extract, and we can easily understand how one who preached thus should command the attention and love of his people.

‘To be a Christian, it is necessary to have the holy Scriptures: you have them in your own mother tongue, so cheap that any body may buy the book, and so plain that the meanest creature may understand it. If any one be so extremely poor, that he cannot purchase a Bible, the charity of other Christians will bestow it for nothing: and if any one cannot read it himself, other Christians will read it to him. How often have I had the honor of doing this for some of you! We had in our congregation a poor, aged widow, who could neither read the Scriptures, nor live without hearing them read; so much instruction and pleasure did she derive from the oracles of God. She lived in a lone place, and the family where she lodged could not read; but there was one more cottage near, and in it a little boy, a shepherd’s son, who could read; but he, full of play, was not fond of reading the Bible. Necessity is the mother of invention. The old widow determined to rise one hour sooner in a morning, to spin one

half-penny more, to be expended in hiring the shepherd's boy to read to her every evening a chapter ; to which he readily agreed. This little advantage made her content in her cottage, and even say, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." You, little boys, learn to read, and read the scriptures, to comfort the old people about you. Perhaps you may make lame and blind people say, for your sakes, "The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places ; yea, we have a goodly heritage." ' pp. 43, 44.

In the same sermon he says,

'Let us finish. Christians, of all men, should be the least prone to discontent. A Christian, who hath God for his portion, and who, dissatisfied with that, renders himself unhappy about the little things of this life, behaves as if he could not enjoy the day for want of a glowworm, or the ocean for want of one little drop more.' p. 49.

On the morality of the Gospel, he thus observes ;

'Morality being a rule of practice must be *clear*. It is a great fault in masters giving orders, to be obscure. Even a willing servant may err through the doubtful meaning of a direction, and in such a case we ought not to tax him with carelessness, but ourselves for not speaking clearly and plainly. This is one proof of the goodness of the morality of the Gospel, that it neither is, nor can be misunderstood. A man desires to be informed what God expects him to do towards himself. The Gospel tells him, God requires him to fear him, to love him, to confide in him, to imitate him, to pray to him, to treat him as the first cause, and the chief good. A man desires to know what Jesus Christ expects of him. The Gospel informs him, that he expects to be heard, to have his doctrine examined and believed, his life imitated, and himself "honored by all men as they honor the Father," to be treated as the Teacher, the Saviour, the Judge, and the Friend of mankind. One wishes to know how he ought to conduct himself to his neighbours. The Gospel tells him, "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Another wishes to know what conduct he ought to observe to his enemies. The Gospel says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Another asks, How ought I to manage myself? The Gospel answers, "If thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from

thee ; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." These duties are so clear that all the world understand them ; therefore Christians love the morality of the Gospel, and therefore the wicked hate it. Clearness is one character of goodness, and the morality of the Gospel hath it.' pp. 61, 62.

The following is a part of what he says of free inquiry in religion.

' Remark, further, that free inquiry in religion is *essential to the virtue* of a character. The virtue of man consists in his making use of all his own faculties ; not in believing that other men have made a virtuous use of theirs. Now it is possible, a man may make use of all his faculties, and yet not be able to perceive the evidence of some opinions, which are called articles of faith ; and consequently he may doubt the truth of those articles, yea, it is necessary to the virtue of his character that he should doubt them ; for it is not in his power to believe without proof, and it would be unjust to profess to believe what he does not believe. Let us not be so weak as to imagine, that a man cannot think justly unless he thinks as we do. Let us allow that his justice consists in thinking, and reasoning, and acting as well as he can ; and that he is accountable for all this, only to "one master, even Christ." As freedom of thought is the parent and guardian of all virtue, so the want of it is the nurse of vice, and particularly of that general disposition to all sin ; I mean servility. A low, servile soul, habituated not to think for itself, but to be led by a guide, is prepared for the commission of any crime, or the belief of any absurdity, that a mercenary guide may find convenient to enjoin. No men teach the depravity, the extreme and excessive depravity of human nature, with a better grace than these men. Were I disposed to sink a soul into the lowest degree of wretchedness, either as a citizen of the world, or as a member of a church, I would inculcate, with all my might, a spirit of servility, and that would answer my end better than any other method in the world. I would not shock a man with the sounds of perjury and blasphemy, impiety to God and injustice to men ; but I would gently inform him, that he was a poor, depraved, foolish creature, not able to judge between good and evil, truth and error, and that he would discover great arrogance if he thought otherwise : but that I was a wise and sacred man, wishing well to his soul, and that by believing what I said to be true, and by doing what I directed to be done, he would be pious, and safe, and happy. There is

therefore no virtue, but a great fund of iniquity in implicit faith.' pp. 172, 173.

Afterward he says,

'By the way, there are many Christians extremely ignorant of the wisdom of the schools, who yet will be always applying the science of other men to their own ideas of religion; and what with learned words and vulgar ideas, polished phrases and gross notions, great sounds and little or no meaning; they make the christian religion the most abstruse of all hard things in the world. Do you wonder you do not understand them? They do not understand themselves.' p. 182.

In a sermon on proper behaviour towards such as give confused accounts of religion, there are the following fine remarks.

'Lastly, our conduct should be *patient*, and we should bear with the evil for the sake of the good. Let me expound this case by another. Our Lord commands us to "love our enemies." Most men complain of the difficulty of this duty, and think it harder than all the Ten Commandments: but would not a little attention to the meaning make this hard thing easy? When a neighbour becomes an enemy, we forget every thing of him except his enmity: that day, that one fatal day, that action, that unjust, that unkind action, that word, that cruel word, occupies the whole of our attention: that we hate, and it deserves hatred, and the Lord doth not require us to love enmity, injustice, and ingratitude, those black and dismal crimes. Now could we find temper to consider the whole of the man, we should find something lovely in him; and that lovely action we ought to esteem, even in the person of an enemy. What! Is virtue nothing, because the man who doth it does not happen to be my friend? Perhaps I love virtue only for the sake of the benefits I derive from it, and perhaps I should find in my heart to dislike an angel, who should pass my door and visit my neighbour who is an enemy to me. The man is not all enmity, he loves his wife and family, and many people; he loves his country, and perhaps his God too, though he doth not happen to like me: but who am I, that I should make love of me a test of excellence? Am I perfect, and always in every moment an object of esteem? People will not enter into these just and mild sentiments, and therefore they see nothing to love in their enemies; but, if they once dislike, go on, like the Philistines and Edomites towards Israel, till hatred is transmitted from father to son, and becomes, as a prophet expresseth it, an "old and perpetual hatred." Apply this to the case in hand. If it be possible to find a little truth in a great mass of error;

that little truth deserves esteem, and we should consider it as the Lord considered Lot, whom "he sent out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which he dwelt." pp. 238, 239.

In regard to the instruction of children in the truths of religion, he says ;

'There are two general ways of teaching children the truths of religion. Some make use of catechisms, which children are made to get by heart. This is an exercise of the memory, but not of the understanding, and therefore nothing is more common than to find children, who can repeat a whole catechism, without knowing any thing more than how to repeat it. The hardest catechisms are certainly the worst ; but the most plain are nothing but an exercise of memory. The chief recommendation of them is, they save a parent a great deal of trouble : but does not the death of a child save you a great deal more ? Yet who would part with her child on that ground ? The other method is by hearing them read some little histories of Scripture, and by asking them questions, to set them a thinking and judging for themselves. This is an exercise of the understanding, and when the understanding is taught its own use, it is set a going true, and if it gets no future damage, it will go true through life. In order to instruct our children, we should inform ourselves ; otherwise they may put us to the blush, and on this principle Joshua enforced religious knowledge among the Jews, "that," saith he, "when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean you by these stones ? then ye shall answer them, The waters of Jordan were cut off," and so on.' pp. 327, 328.

The Morning Exercises are much shorter than the sermons, and have more of a secular character. But they contain excellent advice, which a preacher might well spend his time in giving to such congregations as assembled round Robinson.

If we have formed a just estimate of this volume, it is one of the best with which we are acquainted for circulation, and gratuitous distribution, among the less educated and poorer classes of Christians, and we should be gratified, therefore, if by our present article, we may procure it the attention which it seems to us to deserve.

Notices of Recent Publications.

7. Poems and Essays, by Miss Bowdler. Boston, Wells and Lilly, 1827. 12mo. pp. 268.

WE are glad to see a reprint of this sensible and useful volume. It has passed through at least sixteen editions in England, and well deserves its celebrity because of the comfort and aid which it has given to so many minds. We should possibly have been better pleased if the poetry had been omitted, for it hardly increases the value of the book. It is the Essays, full of the natural expression of quiet and sensible thoughts, of subdued yet fervent feeling, of devout and tranquil faith, together with views of life and manners the most practical and correct, which render it a welcome addition to our stock of religious books. It adds greatly to the interest with which it is read, to know that the essays were written to beguile the hours of long continued disease and suffering; and that they present the picture of the author's own mind, who exemplified all the lessons of faith and patience which she inculcates. We recommend the work to our readers' attention, and cannot do it in better or more just terms, than those of Mr Melmoth, quoted in the Introduction. He 'does not hesitate to declare that he considers the performance' before us, 'as a production of inestimable value to every reader, who has a taste for elegant composition, or a heart disposed to profit by wise instruction; instruction the more forcible, as' the author 'was, it is generally said, the bright exemplar of her own excellent precepts. The genuine principles of christian ethics, undebased by the smallest alloy of bigotry or superstition, are judiciously pursued through their important consequences, and applied with singular accuracy to the various purposes of moral agency. The language and the sentiment lie level to the most *ordinary* understanding, at the same time that the most *improved* will find much to admire in both. A style that neither seeks nor requires the aid of artificial ornament, distinguishes every page; and a vein of modest eloquence runs through the whole.'

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8. Address delivered at the Eleventh Anniversary of the Massachusetts Peace Society, December 25, 1826. By Timothy Fuller. Boston, C. S. Hamilton, 1827.

THE expectation of universal and permanent peace is often considered as the dream of enthusiasts. Many, however, are

undoubtedly in favor of all that has been done or can be done to recommend this object, who have never looked for an early attainment of it. They regard it as an end to be constantly kept in view, and promoted, let its accomplishment be never so distant. Centuries may pass away, before the world at large is convinced that its accomplishment would be for their best interest. Yet the blessing of the peace maker may in the meanwhile be actuating more and more strongly the children of God in every land. The prospect may be constantly brightening, their fellow labourers every year becoming more numerous, and that kingdom which cometh not with observation be established in more and more hearts, though a careless observer may consider the hope of final success as still vain and fallacious. But that end ought not to be rashly given up as unattainable, towards which some visible and marked progress has been made; and are there not circumstances in the present aspect of the world, which may allow us to hope that Christianity will finally prevail over war? This religion of peace is gradually and silently taking place of all those delusions which taught men to think war and warlike glory, revenge and the extermination of enemies, were regarded with favor by the invisible powers of heaven. The altars that a few centuries ago smoked with sacrifices to the God of battle, now send up incense to the ever present Jehovah. The breeze that brought with it the noise of the war song now falls upon the ear with the notes of the evening hymn. War itself has lost much of its ferocious nature. It 'has not indeed ceased, but is disarmed of half its horrors. Massacre, extermination, and *slavery* are no longer avowed as the objects of war or as its necessary concomitants. Hostile armies, except in the heat of conflict, spare the lives of the vanquished, and often extend to them the offices of humanity.' (Address, p. 6.)

The very existence of Peace Societies proves that great progress has been made in the cause they advocate. The confidence of the friends of this cause is an indication and a source of their strength. The western continent is free, and it is not the interest of freemen to be at war. 'It becomes the virtuous and good of all nations, and especially of our own free and happy States to impart, as far as in us lies, to the rising communities the benign spirit of our own constitution, our laws, and maxims of peace and national justice. Much has already been done by our example; much by the intercommunication[?] of the citizens of our States with those of the new born Republics; and much may be effected by the friendly policy, which our government, in coincidence with the feelings of the nation, has adopted in its diplomatic intercourse with them. It scarcely seems an expression

of exaggerated hope, to predict a system of amity and justice, so humanely conceived and so wisely adjusted between ourselves and all the existing nations of this hemisphere, as to ensure a long reign of harmony and friendship with all its attendant blessings.' (p. 17.) This spirit of freedom, and with it the love of individual peace and enjoyment, may spread more rapidly, when it shall be seen that a greatness and glory may be obtained in peace, which cannot be hoped from war.

When it shall be found that it is the interest of the nations to remain at peace, means will be sought for reconciling national differences without resort to war. Such means have been found by the United States and England. A question has been amicably settled by reference to a friendly power, which was of much greater importance than many which have been the cause of bloody and destructive wars. If one difference has been so settled, many may; and it is not unreasonable to hope that by the mutual consent of several nations, a tribunal shall be formed, to which all their disputes may be referred for adjustment.

These are some of the circumstances which have been ably and fully presented in the Address before us, to induce the friends of peace to rejoice in the hope of its final prevalence, and to encourage them 'never to abandon the great purposes of their association.'

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9. *Hymns for Social and Private Worship.* Boston, Wait, Greene, and Co. 1827. 18mo. pp. 150.

THIS little volume has been compiled on the principle, that every hymn intended to be sung in public or in private, should take the form of a direct address to the Supreme Being. We do not think this principle a sound one. Our reasons for not so regarding it we have already given.* It seems never to have been so considered by any writers of sacred poetry, and if universally and rigorously applied, would throw into disuse a very great proportion of hymns which we cannot but regard as among the very best in our language. Even in prayer, it is not a principle always followed throughout the exercise, and the consequence often is a great gain in point of force and expression. There is, it is true, great danger of departing from it too far. Nothing can be more revolting than those devotional exercises in which it almost totally disregarded. It is not an age since we heard from a pulpit in this city, and it was an Orthodox pulpit too, what was doubtless intended for a prayer, but what would certainly have been more in place in a lecture on political economy. The system of checks and balances in the constitution of

* Vol. III. p. 496.

our national government, was detailed with a minuteness and accuracy which would not have disgraced the pages of the *Federalist*. So in hymns, there is an extreme of a similar character, which cannot be too carefully avoided. But, if they contain such religious sentiments as a devout christian would approve, and be sung with a solemn recognition of the presence of God, the mere form in which they are written, is, in our view, of little or no importance.

There is another principle which has been followed in compiling the volume before us; viz. that when hymns are sung in concert, they should be sung 'in plural language to signify a joint cooperation.' This we cannot but think an over refinement. The very act of singing together is a sign of 'joint cooperation,' nay, is 'joint cooperation' itself. Besides, if 'we' and 'our' must be used in social worship, 'I' and 'my' are the only proper words for worship in private, and this volume is fit only to be employed for one of the purposes announced in its title. From this last principle we have discovered no deviation; but from the first, departures are frequent, and it would have been a miracle had it been otherwise. Still this collection has been made from the best of motives and the best of feelings; and though we think the rules its compilers have adopted are too exclusive, there are doubtless many who view the subject as they do, and for such persons they have performed, and performed well, a most acceptable service. The volume is a small one, and the hymns generally among the most unexceptionable we have, and may circulate and do good where larger collections cannot find their way. As the profits of the edition, should there be any, are to be given to a most praiseworthy charity, there is another inducement cordially to wish it success.

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10. Books for Children. 1. The Advantage of a Good Resolution. 2. The Four Apples. 3. The Confession. 4. The Child who took what did not belong to her. 5. The Botanical Garden. 6. John Williams, or the Sailor Boy. Boston, Bowles and Dearborn, 1827. pp. 92.—7. Evening Hours, Nos. I, II, III. Boston, Munroe and Francis, and New York, C. S. Francis, 1827. pp. 106.

THE first six little books, whose titles we have given, are the beginning of a series of books for children, which thus far entitle the publishers to the thanks of parents. The number of stories and religious fictions designed for very young readers, in which the sentiments of the popular theology are more or less clearly inculcated, is almost incredible. This, like every other branch of Orthodox influence, is systematized, and the country is likely

to be overspread by little books, that will instil theological prejudices into the mind long before it is capable of detecting the art or the purpose. It will be a worse plague than that mentioned in the Old Testament; 'There came a grievous swarm into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt; the land was corrupt by reason of the swarm.' We are glad, therefore, that the attention of writers and publishers, who entertain more rational views of religion, is beginning to be directed to the wants of childhood. Our wish is not that children should be kept from reading, but that proper books should be prepared, in which simple and practical truths only shall be exhibited in interesting relations. The stories published by Messrs Bowles and Dearborn have this object, and are unexceptionable in character. Printed on a good paper, with a large type, and ornamented with a neat wood cut, they are suited to attract those for whom they are written. The six we have mentioned, belong to a series, which, though composed of distinct narratives, is so pagged as to constitute a volume. John Williams is an excellent story, and was read by us with peculiar interest from our knowledge that it was in almost every incident true, or, as children say, real.

Evening Hours is a work of somewhat different character, and was written for an older class of children. It contains, in successive numbers, a familiar exposition of the evangelical history, and such practical remarks as a judicious christian mother might be disposed to make to her children, when perusing with them the bible. Incidents of action are introduced, that give an air of reality to the fiction, and render the instruction more attractive. The design is excellent; its execution good. We think the author has in some instances suited the matter and the expressions to youth rather than to children, and we would advise a greater adaptation to a tenderer age in the future numbers. We know not how far this work will be carried. But we hope it will not be closed, till the entire narrative of our Saviour's life has been illustrated; and then we should be pleased to have from the same pen, a series of conversations on the character of Christ. We have always found children interested by plain and affectionate discourse respecting him who 'took little children in his arms and blessed them.' We recommend the series we have noticed, and particularly Evening Hours to parents and Sunday School teachers.

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11. A Catechism for Children. By Henry Colman. Fourth Edition. Salem, J. R. Buffum and J. M. Ives, 1826. pp. 26.

THIS little catechism, in point of arrangement, simplicity and

clearness of expression, and the good judgment shown in the selection of topics of instruction, is one of the very best in use. There is nothing in it, which mere children, for whom it is intended, cannot understand, nothing which it is not of the very first importance they should know, respecting God and his providence; their duties to Him, to themselves, and others; their condition here, and their hopes hereafter; Jesus Christ and his religion; the bible and how they should use it. An explanation is in one section given, in the simplest terms, of the names of Jesus Christ, with reasons for observing the first day of the week, an account of the Lord's supper, of baptism, and of other words and phrases which are often on the lips of children and of which it is important they should have clear conceptions. This is followed by the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, a Summary of human duty in the words of Jesus, the christian Rule of Equity, the Invitations of Jesus, the Prophet's character of Christ, three Lessons for Children by Dr Paley, a Prayer for a Child, and the Lord's Prayer. All is admirably adapted, as we have said, to the capacities for which it is intended, and there is not in the whole a questionable sentiment or expression.

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12. An Address, delivered at the Opening of the Boston Mechanics' Institution, February 7, 1827. By George B. Emerson. Boston, Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1827. 8vo. pp. 24.

THIS Address of Mr Emerson is exactly suited to the occasion and to the audience for which it was intended. It is a plain, simple, and perspicuous statement of the objects of the Institution and of the ends which it may be expected to fulfil, without any of that attempt at display for which the performances of our countrymen on all occasions are so remarkable. He takes a view of the origin and progress of institutions of a similar kind, and the effects which they may be expected to produce, directly upon the qualifications of mechanics for their peculiar occupations, and also indirectly upon their intellectual and moral characters generally. In both these respects, and fully as much in the latter as in the former, we concur with Mr Emerson in entertaining the highest expectations of the influence which institutions of this kind are to have in improving the character and condition of that large, and, among us, highly important and respectable class of the community, which is immediately concerned in them. It is gratifying to be able to remark that a deep interest has been taken in promoting the success of the Boston Institution, by many persons of scientific attainments, who are not practical mechanics; and that the very full attendance upon the lectures which have already been

delivered, indicates the spirit which has been awakened, and which is likely rather to increase than diminish.

Intelligence.

The Christian Denomination—We are happy in being able to lay before our readers the following account of the rise, progress, character, faith, and prospects of the Christian denomination in the United States. The document containing it is an official one, and is given entire. We are not aware that it has ever before been published in this country. We gratefully acknowledge our obligation to the writer for permitting it to appear in our work, though it is hardly to be expected we should concur with him in every sentiment he expresses. It is in the form of a letter to the Corresponding Secretary of the General Baptist Assembly of England, and is a most interesting and authentic article of intelligence.

New York, January 30th, 1827.

MR SMALLFIELD,

THE United States General Christian Conference, which was holden at Windham, Connecticut, on the first of September last, were sorry to learn that the contemplated correspondence between the Christian denomination in the United States of America, and the General Baptists of England, had been wholly neglected on the part of our Corresponding Committee, and that the letters from yourself as the Corresponding Secretary of your brethren had miscarried. The Conference are desirous that the contemplated correspondence should be carried into effect, and as an evidence of the sincerity of their profession appointed the Rev. Mr Jones of Salem, Massachusetts, the Rev. Mr Badger of Mendon, New York, and myself, a Corresponding Committee to accomplish the desirable object. The Committee have met and appointed me their Corresponding Secretary, with instructions to write to you before the sitting of your General Assembly in April next;—in whose name I now make the following communication.

The Christian denomination having been the last that has risen in the world, which has come to any note or respectability, is probably the least known both at home and abroad, of all the religious sects at the present day. Consequently the generality of writers who have condescended to notice us, have usually given

an erroneous and confused account of our character, faith, and numbers. The obscurity of the Christian denomination of which I speak, has originated from a number of causes, the principal of which, however, are the manner of our rise, and the means by which we have spread ourselves and our views of divine truth. We have had no Luther, no Calvin, no Fox, no Wesley, who has headed a party of Christians and been recognised as a master among us, and whose fame has been celebrated as a founder of a new sect. Neither have we had any Council, Synod, General Assembly, or Conference to frame articles of faith separate from the scriptures to impose upon the consciences of our brethren, and bind the disciples of Christ, who has said *call no man master on earth*.

The rise and progress of the Christian denomination, have been attended with many peculiar characteristics. As I have already intimated, no individual is recognised as the founder of a new sect, as has formerly been the case among other denominations of Christians. Many individuals in different parts of the United States, about the same time, became dissatisfied with that sectarian spirit, which seems to be the ruling and governing principle of most of the christian sects of the present day, and likewise with the principles upon which they acted as religious bodies. It appeared to us that all the various sects had greatly departed from the *simplicity that is in Christ*, and from that spirit of *love and union*, which our blessed Lord had so earnestly and frequently inculcated upon all his disciples in every age, and which constitute the very essence of Christianity; that they moreover by introducing *force* instead of *choice* as a principle of action in religious bodies, had violated the rights of conscience, invaded the prerogatives of the King of Heaven, and divided and scattered the flock of Christ. We farther saw that in carrying on and maintaining this sectarian and theological warfare between different parties of Christians, many unhallowed weapons were employed, many false and erroneous statements made to excite prejudice against each other, much time and money wasted that might be better employed, and many unchristian tempers cherished and nourished; that in many instances professors of different parties, instead of uniting their efforts to reform the wicked and diffuse the blessings of the gospel through the destitute parts of our country, were contending about the *mint, anise, and cumin* of religion, and wasting all their strength to no purpose.

Under these circumstances many individuals, becoming dissatisfied with the movements of sectarian bodies, withdrew from different sectarian denominations, and formed themselves into

independent churches on the principles of christian liberty. In New England we first separated from the Calvinistic Baptists. As soon as it was understood that a separation had actually taken place, and a new denomination been instituted upon liberal principles, a number of large churches of the Calvinistic Baptists, declared themselves independent of the Baptist Association, and united with the new party. Many new churches were constituted in a very short time. The doors of the meetinghouses of the Free-will and Six-principle Baptists were all thrown open to the ministers of the new sect, and at first it was expected they would all be amalgamated into one body. This, however, has not fully taken place as yet, although a friendly intercourse is still cultivated among us.

The principles upon which the new churches were constituted were the following. The scriptures of truth were to be the only rule of faith and practice, and each individual to be left at liberty to search the divine records, and exercise and enjoy the inalienable right of private judgment, both as it relates to doctrine and practice; and no individual member to be subject to the loss of church fellowship, so long as he lived a life of piety and devotion, on account of his sincere and conscientious belief. No one was to be subject to discipline and church censure but for immoral conduct. The name Christian should be taken to the exclusion of all sectarian names, as the most proper appellation to designate the body and its members. The only test of admission to the membership of a church, should be a personal profession of the christian religion, accompanied with an evidence of sincerity and piety and a determination to walk according to the divine rule. Each church to be considered an independent body, possessed of supreme authority to regulate and govern its internal affairs.

The topics on which we dwelt most in our preaching, were the excellency and sufficiency of the scriptures as a rule of faith and practice. We contrasted the scriptures with human creeds and formularies of faith, giving the bible the preference, which we claimed as our only and all sufficient rule. We insisted upon the rights of private judgment, which no man had power to alienate, and denied that any man or body of men whatever had any right to impose his or their sentiments upon another. We insisted upon the absolute necessity of personal religion, of holiness of heart and purity of life; and that sinful and wicked men must become holy and pure by a change of heart and conduct, before they could be regarded as the proper subjects of the kingdom of heaven. We portrayed the evil effects of sectarianism, its bad moral influence upon society, and its chilling and withering

effects upon vital religion. We asserted that we had seen and felt these things, and from a conviction of its evil tendencies, had renounced it; that we had dropped every name but that of Christian, and extended our love, charity, and christian fellowship *to all who lived godly in Christ Jesus*. It was our constant theme,

‘Let names, and sects, and parties fall,
And Jesus Christ be all in all!’

We maintained that our churches were established upon those broad and liberal principles inculcated in the New Testament; that they were open to the reception of all sincere and devoted Christians; that we laid more stress upon the virtue of the character, than upon a speculative belief in this or that doctrine; and herein lay the most important distinction between the Christian denomination and other sects; for they preferred a correct belief in speculative points to evangelical piety and morality. We asserted that the principles upon which we acted were peculiarly favorable to the formation of a deep and thorough piety, as they threw open the heart to expansive benevolence and inculcated christian charity, and that these were the only principles upon which all Christians could be cemented together in union and brotherly love. We furthermore proved that the uniformity of sentiment, so much contended for by the different sects as the only ground of union among Christians, existed merely in profession; that no such uniformity had ever existed in the church of Rome, for she had always been fermented by divisions and discordant sentiments; and that no uniformity of sentiment, strictly speaking, existed in the discordant sects around us. We also maintained from the nature and constitution of man, the diversity of their capacities, the habits of thinking and different modes of education, that a diversity of sentiment would be entertained by different Christians on the subject of religion, as well as on all other subjects, and, consequently, the only way of preserving union among Christians is by keeping *the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. We accordingly inculcated in our own societics, charity, forbearance, and brotherly love.

These topics with their connexions and dependencies, were dwelt upon with interest and zeal in our public discourses; and as we preached altogether extempore, the effect produced was similar to that of the preaching of the celebrated Whitfield, Wesley, and their associates, at the commencement of Methodism. These principles we disseminated, not so much by our writings as by our personal labors. And as all ministers travelled more or less, and many devoted the whole of their time to travelling

and preaching *the word of the kingdom*, there was a rapid diffusion of our sentiments through the country, and an astonishing increase of our numbers. The Lord has been with us and multiplied us, and spread us over the face of the new world.

About the same time we commenced our operations in New England, others enlisted in the same cause in the Southern and Western States, at that time wholly unknown to each other. In the Southern States they separated principally from the Methodists, and in the Western from the Presbyterians. These bodies, however, shortly became acquainted with each other, and have long since been considered as forming one extensive denomination of Christians, and have cooperated together in promoting the general cause of truth and piety.

From the rapid increase of our numbers and extent of the body, it was soon found necessary, in order to maintain a friendly intercourse, to cultivate mutual friendship, and to bring into active operation the mutual energies of the whole body in support and promotion of the general cause, to form associations of churches and ministers, called by us Conferences. These Conferences, however, have no prerogative over the independency of the churches. The plan which has been adopted in forming Conferences is the following; that the ministers and churches, which are represented by delegation, form themselves into one Conference, or more, as may be convenient in each State. Hence the origin of what we call State Conferences, and all these were to form one by delegation, denominated the United States General Christian Conference; this Conference to meet as often as shall be deemed expedient. It has always met every year since its formation, save in one instance. No delegate, however, as yet has met with us from the Western States. It is expected they will be represented at the sitting of the next Conference. We have an account, through the medium of our periodical works, of the following number of conferences, which have been formed in the different States. One in the State of Maine; one in New Hampshire; one in Vermont; one in Massachusetts; one in Rhode Island and Connecticut; two in New York and New Jersey; one in Pennsylvania; one in Virginia; one in North Carolina; three in Kentucky; one in Tennessee; one in Alabama; four in Ohio; one in Indiana; one in Illinois; one in Missouri; and one other which has recently been formed in one of the Western States.

It would be difficult to determine correctly the extent of our numbers. In looking over the minutes of the several Conferences, I perceive they give an aggregate of about five hundred ministers. The number of churches belonging to several of the

Conferences is not given ; but the whole number is generally estimated to be from seven hundred to a thousand. The most probable estimate gives fifty thousand communicants, and about two hundred thousand, including the congregations who wait upon our ministry, who have embraced the principles and doctrine inculcated in the Christian denomination. It will be seen that this estimate of our probable number is much larger than that given by Mr Potter in his letter. It has been ascertained that our body is much more extensive than it was supposed to be at the time he wrote. Besides, our increase since then has been very considerable.

We have now established among us three periodical works, published monthly, in a pamphlet form, similar to the Christian Reformer. The oldest is the Christian Herald, published by R. Foster, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This work was first published by the Rev. E. Smith in the form of a newspaper, and is said to be the first religious newspaper published in the world. The second is the Gospel Luminary, conducted by the Rev. Mr Millard of West Bloomfield in the state of New York, for the two Conferences in that state. The third is the Christian Messenger, a work recently commenced under the direction of the Rev. Barton W. Stone, Georgetown, Kentucky. The Rev. Mr Potter's paper was discontinued at the close of the first year.

We have no public seminary or theological school under our direction. Those ministers who have received a classical education in the denomination, have been educated privately, or at some of the public colleges under the direction of the different sectarian denominations. Many of our ministers have only a common English education, and some others have educated themselves. We make no boast of a learned ministry. We say with the eminent Robinson, '*Let him who understands the gospel, teach it.*'

As it respects doctrine, it is granted, when the Christian denomination first began to organize societies, there was a great diversity of sentiments and opinions among us ; for some were educated Baptists, some Methodists, and others Presbyterians, each party bringing along with them the prejudices of education. In New England, as we separated from the Calvinistic Baptists, a few of the first churches were established upon the principles of close communion ; but this was soon abandoned as unscriptural. In the Western states, as they separated from the Presbyterians, they were at first Pedobaptists, but in a few years they all became Baptists and were baptized. At first we were all nominally Trinitarians, having been educated in that doctrine. The doctrine, however, was soon canvassed, brought to the test of

revelation, and universally rejected as unscriptural and anti-christian, with all its concomitant doctrines.

From these few remarks it will be readily seen that we were united at first only in the great principles of christian liberty, taking the scriptures of truth as our only rule of faith and practice, with a firm determination to go where this *lamp to our feet and light to our path* should lead us. Having shaken off the trammels of human formularies, and freed ourselves of the frowns of a disaffected hierarchy, we were now prepared to read the scriptures with a mind free from bias and prejudice. We accordingly searched the divine record with serious and prayerful attention. It was made a topic of conversation in our private circles. Many points were discussed in our periodicals, and, in various ways, such an interest was excited among us to know what was, and what was not taught in the New Testament, that we read it over again and again till we made ourselves completely masters of the letter, and were able by this means to show that many things, held quite sacred by the different sects around us, both as it relates to doctrine and practice, were unauthorised by scripture. For instance, when a Trinitarian attacked us, and began to talk about three persons in the Godhead, he was immediately requested to show the chapter and verse where the doctrine of three persons in one God was taught; and when he evaded our request by asserting the holy and ever blessed trinity was a profound mystery, he was requested to show in what part of the bible the trinity was called a mystery, and as he could not do this, he was then told the doctrine of the trinity was not a mystery, but a riddle, a contradiction, an absurdity, a doctrine no where taught in the bible. In this way our most unlearned ministers were able to put down and confound at once their most learned opponents.

By searching the divine record and explaining it in a connected sense, we very shortly arrived at about the same conclusions as it respects the true doctrine of the gospel; so that at present there is quite a uniformity of sentiment among us. We understand the true doctrine of the gospel to be included in the following short summary:—

1. That there is one living and true God, the Father almighty, who is unoriginated, independent, and eternal, the creator and supporter of all worlds; and that this God is one spiritual intelligence, one infinite mind, ever the same, never varying.
2. That this God is the moral governor of the world, the absolute source of all the blessings of nature, providence and grace, in whose infinite wisdom, goodness, mercy, benevolence, and love has originated all the moral dispensations to man.
3. That all

men in every age, country, and grade of society, sin and come short of the glory of God, consequently fall under the curse of the law. 4. That Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and Saviour of the world; the Mediator between God and men, by whom God has revealed his will to mankind, and by whose death and resurrection the new covenant has been confirmed and ratified, by whose instrumentality God is still carrying on his benevolent purposes towards the human family, who also is appointed of God to raise the dead and judge the world at the last day. 5. That the Holy Spirit is the power and energy of God; that holy influence of God by whose agency in the use of means the wicked are regenerated, converted, and recovered to a virtuous and holy life; sanctified and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and that by the same Spirit the saints in the use of means are comforted, strengthened, and led in the path of duty. 6. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 7. The free forgiveness of sins on the ground of the rich unpurchased mercy of God, which has been revealed in Christ and confirmed by his death, so that this mercy and forgiveness comes to us through the labors, sufferings, and blood of our blessed Lord. 8. The necessity of repentance towards God. 9. Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. 10. The absolute necessity of holiness of heart and rectitude of life, to enjoy the favor and approbation of God. 11. The doctrine of a future state of immortality. 12. The doctrine of a righteous retribution, when God will render to every man according to the deeds done in the body.

All these great and important truths we fully believe are taught in the New Testament, and we all agree that they include the first principles of Christianity. In some smaller points there is a difference of opinion among us. Some believe in the personal preexistence of our Lord, and others reject that doctrine; all believe in the doctrine of his miraculous conception. Some believe the suffering of the finally impenitent will terminate in their utter destruction; the great majority consider the scriptures leave them in a suffering condition; none profess the doctrine of final restitution to holiness and happiness. We find no such doctrine revealed in the scriptures, and as we take revelation to be the rule of our faith, on this ground it is wholly indefensible. We consider the doctrine resting wholly upon inferences and deductions, which are no proof, no revelation. In this country nearly all the Universalists have renounced this doctrine. They now deny the doctrine of a future retribution altogether, and maintain, that all who die impenitent will be raised from the dead morally holy and pure, and consequently

must be happy. This is the inference they draw from the benevolence of the Deity. It requires, however, but little discernment to see that this doctrine strips Christianity of its chief motives to a holy and virtuous life.

It will be seen by this short statement of our faith, that we are strictly Unitarian in our sentiments. We, however, choose to be known by the name of Christian to the exclusion of all other names not found in the scriptures, this being the most significant appellation of the followers of Christ, and agreeably to our views, given by divine appointment. It will be proper here to state, that our mode of preaching and applying these doctrines is very different from that body of Christians usually denominated Unitarians. We are Evangelical Unitarians in preaching and applying the Unitarian doctrine; and are frequently denominated the Evangelical Unitarians, to distinguish us from the Unitarians in this country and in England. It is this mode of preaching and applying the Unitarian doctrine, which has crowned our labors with such a rich harvest; it is this which has given us access to the common people, who constitute the greatest part of our churches and congregations; it is this through the medium of which we hope to prove a blessing to the world; and it is this which constitutes us the pride and glory of Unitarianism.

Like all other new denominations, we have had to encounter much powerful opposition, endure many hard struggles, and bear the burden and heat of the day; in the midst of a complication of reproaches from older and more popular sects, our labors have been abundant, and our exertions unwearied; we have fought the good fight of faith, and hope to lay hold on eternal life. Many of our preachers have been young men, who in the morning of life have renounced all for Christ's sake, who have gone forth in the strength and ardor of youth, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to a perishing world, and having food and raiment, have been content therewith. *The wilderness has budded and blossomed as the rose, the desert has rejoiced, and the solitary places been glad for them.* The power and glory of God has been revealed, and the light of a pure, spiritual, and rational religion is diffusing itself through the new world. Primitive christianity is stripping off the meretricious ornaments with which she had been clad in the dark ages, and rising in all her beauty, glory, and excellency. Many of her mistaken sons are coming forth to the light, beholding new charms and graces in the mother of us all.

The prospects of the Christian denomination are more encouraging than at any former period. During the last year we have been favored with many precious revivals of religion, and

many new churches have been planted. Report brings cheering intelligence from the Western States. In those parts the success of a free gospel has exceeded our most sanguine expectations. It is stated by Mr ———, who has been travelling under the direction of the American Unitarian Association in the Western States, to collect information respecting the moral and religious state of that part of our country, that the Christian denomination are the most pious, intelligent, and increasing body of people in the Western States. The same account is given by the Rev. Mr Badger who has recently visited those parts under the direction of the Western Conference in this state.* We regard ourselves as feeble instruments in the hands of Him who ruleth over all, in the accomplishment of these mighty acts which God has wrought by us. To Him be all the glory and praise for ever and ever.

In closing this account of the rise, progress, character, numbers, faith, and prospects of the Christian denomination, I will once more observe, that I am authorised to state the Conference exceedingly regret, that this correspondence has been delayed to this late period; some of the circumstances of delay, however, have been beyond their control. It is hoped in future we shall be able to continue the correspondence regularly. You will be so good as to answer this communication soon after the sitting of your General Assembly in April next, so that your communication may be in time to be laid before the United States General Christian Conference to be holden the first day of September next.

With every sentiment of gratitude and esteem,
I subscribe myself your brother and friend,

SIMON CLOUGH.

MR GEORGE SMALLFIELD.

Theological School at Cambridge —The friends of this institution have reason to congratulate themselves and the public on its condition and prospects; a brief account of which we propose here to lay before them, together with a statement of its deficiencies and wants. Regarding it, as we do, an object of the highest interest and importance to the religious community, we would both keep them apprized of its actual state, and urge them to increase its means of usefulness.

Divinity Hall, the public building of the School, was finished and dedicated in August 1826. It is placed in a pleasant and retired spot at a little distance from the buildings of the

* New York.

University. It contains a Library, a Chapel, and rooms for the accommodation of fortytwo students, each of whom occupies a separate apartment. The arrangement of the building is on a novel plan, and has given great satisfaction for its conveniences, while its retirement from the University and the village, and its keeping near each other those who are engaged in similar pursuits, are calculated to have a most favorable influence on the habits and manners of the young men. At the same time, its vicinity to the University is such, that they may enjoy to the fullest extent the great advantages resulting from its extensive Library, from the public Lectures of its professors, and from habitual intercourse with men of enlarged minds and literary attainments. Some charitable foundations in the College for this object, together with a portion of the income of the theological funds and contributions from societies and individuals, give means of affording pecuniary aid to such students as require it.

The instruction in the School is given by the Hollis Professor of Divinity, the Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature, the Hancock Professor of Hebrew, and a Teacher of the German language. There is an annual examination of all the classes in April by the Faculty, in presence of the Directors, and a public exhibition in July. The School is also visited at times by a committee of the Directors, who have a constant general oversight of its affairs.

During the three years which complete the regular course of instruction, it is intended, as far as possible, to accomplish the following objects, the means for affecting which are now provided.

I. To make the student acquainted with the Hebrew language, so as to enable him to read the Old Testament critically, and to give him a general knowledge of the literary history of its several books, of the arguments for and against their genuineness and authenticity; the facts and principles relating to the criticism of their text; and of the various sources of their illustration, especially those to be found in the best commentators. During this course of instruction, particular attention is given to what is most remarkable in the contents of the different books.

II. To afford such instruction in the German language as will enable the student to make whatever proficiency in it he may desire, so as to have always at command this important key to biblical learning.

III. To enable the student to obtain just views of the meaning and purpose of the several books of the New Testament; to which end they are all gone over critically, from one to three chapters being made the subject of each exercise. The princi-

ples of the interpretation of language are taught in connexion ; and likewise the facts and principles relating to the criticism of the text of the New Testament.

IV. To afford instruction in the doctrines and evidences of natural religion ; in the evidences of revealed religion ; in christian theology ; in the nature and history of christian institutions, ecclesiastical powers, rights, and duties, and the relations and duties of the pastoral office.

V. To give readiness in extempore speaking by extempore discussions, held one evening in each week by the whole School in the presence of one of the Faculty ; and also by a discourse delivered extempore each week by one of the students.

VI. To afford instruction in the composition and delivery of sermons, and the proper mode of conducting public worship ; two evenings in each week being set apart for this purpose, when sermons are delivered, and public worship offered by the students of the two older classes in rotation, in the presence of the School, and of the Faculty ; the members of the Faculty remarking upon the performances.

To aid them in these pursuits, the students have access to the books in the College Library, as already mentioned, and to a small collection just commenced in Divinity Hall. But the want of a good theological library is at present, one of the greatest deficiencies of the School. A library is the very heart of such an institution. Where books are to be found, there will be scholars ; and without them scholars cannot exist. In every thing beyond elementary learning, they must be the main dependence of the student and of the instructor. There is no one in our country engaged in the thorough examination of any branch of knowledge, but must have felt continual embarrassment from his inability to procure those works, which he may have occasion to study or consult. If they are to be obtained by him at all, it is often only at an expense which most students can ill afford, and after the delay of months or a year in sending across the Atlantic. It is gratifying to perceive that the public attention is at last directed to this subject, which is of such vital importance to the growth of literature and science in the country. The proper zeal which has manifested itself in our cities, particularly in Boston, it may be hoped will extend to our Colleges. The Directors of the Theological School in Cambridge have devoted to this object, all the means which could properly be applied to it ; and for the deficiency which exists, they have no other resource than the public liberality, and the just interest which ought to be felt, and, it is believed, is felt, in the institution under their care.

It will be perceived from the preceding statement, that no provision is made for distinct and systematic instruction in Ecclesiastical History and the Pastoral Care, although both these subjects receive much attention from the present officers, so that the School cannot be said to suffer materially from the deficiency. But as its numbers are increasing, and it is desirable that more time should be given to these important subjects, than can be devoted by men who are constantly engaged in other branches, the institution must be considered deficient until express provision for them shall be made. Many friends of the institution are known to have felt strong interest in this subject, particularly as regards a professorship for the Pastoral Care, while they regard it as in some measure essential to its prosperity. We hope that they will not suffer their good wishes to pass away in words, but will take some active and effectual steps toward establishing at once, an office whose labors are needed and whose influence would be so beneficial.

Another deficiency yet remaining to be supplied, is that of aid to the students who are preparing themselves for the ministry without sufficient means of their own. Experience has satisfactorily proved, that without such aid an institution of this character cannot prosper, nor the churches be supplied with pastors. The means at the command of this institution have already been described. In its present growing state they are altogether inadequate, and need to be permanently enlarged. The Directors have proposed to this end, that Scholarships should be founded, with funds of 2,000 dollars each, the income of which would be sufficient for the support of one student. They look with confidence to the donations and bequests of liberal friends for the accomplishment of this project. They have taken pains also, to interest some of our congregations in the object, and have actually obtained from subscriptions in six churches, the means of aiding as many young men the present year. In some of these the subscription is to be continued annually. This measure is to be regarded as one of no small importance to the institution; not only on account of the aid which is in this way so easily bestowed, but chiefly because of the sympathy and connexion which thus grow up between the churches and the seminary from which they are to derive their ministers.

In concluding this brief statement, we earnestly recommend this institution to the favor, the patronage, and the prayers of our brethren. Those who are acquainted with its concerns, know that they are in a prosperous state, and that the spirit of study, improvement, and piety prevails to a most commendable and gratifying extent. We speak it with the sincerest and most

heartfelt confidence and pleasure; and we will not allow ourselves to doubt that those, who perceive the immense consequence of such a seminary to the interests of truth and religion, and how much its best influences must depend on its being put in possession of the best and most extensive means,—will readily and cheerfully contribute to supply the deficiencies we have pointed out, and render still more efficacious the means which it now enjoys. It ought to be a favorite object with our religious community; for, as far as human judgment can discern, it is only the favor of man and the blessing of God on this School, which can secure to our churches the services of enlightened and liberal advocates of the uncorrupt and simple gospel.

The Miltonian.—This is a political newspaper published in Northumberland County, in the heart of Pennsylvania, and extensively circulated in the western parts of that State. Several numbers of it fell into our hands a few months ago, and we found each of them to contain spirited and able articles in favor of Unitarianism; and we were happy to learn, that though this had been going on for some time, the patronage of the paper had not suffered, on the whole, in consequence. We regard this as one of the clearest evidences that can be given of the rapid progress of liberal opinions throughout our country; for, ten years ago, we do not believe that any editor in the Union would have dared to insert articles, like those above mentioned, in a political journal. We only wish, that more sympathy could be excited amongst us in favor of those, who, at a distance from the strong places of Unitarianism, and almost unsupported, are bearing their testimony to the truth with a martyr's spirit, and sometimes with a martyr's sacrifices.

Manchester College.—This seminary, barely mentioned in our last number as among the institutions in England under Unitarian control, was founded at Manchester, Feb. 22, 1786, and removed to York, Sept. 1, 1803, to be placed under the care of Rev. Mr Wellbeloved, who is now theological tutor and principal. Rev. William Turner, jr. is tutor in mathematics, physical science, and intellectual philosophy, and Rev. John Kenrick, in the classical and oriental languages, and in rhetoric. The institution derives its support from funds which yield about £900 annually, from annual subscriptions and benefactions, collections in Unitarian churches, and what are called Fellowship contributions. The receipts from these various sources for fifteen months, amounted, according to the last report which we have seen, to about £2500. There are generally about thirty

students, two thirds of them preparing for the University. Others pay 100 guineas *per annum*, 'which defrays the expense of lectures, board and lodging, and every other charge connected with a residence in the College.' Divinity students, when on the foundation, have their whole expenses of lectures, board, and lodging defrayed. The course of study, which comprehends five years, is so arranged, that with the exception of Hebrew, it is alike suitable, during the first three, for both descriptions of students.

The students are lodged, one in a room, in three or four plain but neat and convenient brick buildings, surrounding a court upon one of the northern streets of the city. The mathematical tutor occupies one of the buildings, in which is a refectory, and the domestic arrangements are under his control. The chapel contains some portraits of distinguished divines and benefactors of the College, and there is a very valuable library, consisting of 9000 select volumes. The young men are uniformly represented as studious and exemplary. In time past, the complaint has been made that they came from the College rather learned than apt to teach. But it is now agreed on all hands that there is continually less and less occasion for it, and that the College is exciting a strong and unanimous interest in the Unitarian body. It is the only public literary institution of that denomination in England, and furnishes a large proportion of its ministers, though not a few are supplied from Glasgow, where no doctrinal test is imposed on students, and by conversions from Calvinism.

Unitarian Mission at Calcutta.—The Society for the Promotion of Christianity in India, some time since pledged itself to provide, and authorised its Executive Committee to transmit to the Unitarian Committee of Calcutta, \$600 *per annum* for ten years, in case of the establishment of a Unitarian mission in that place. The first payment has accordingly been made out of the funds arising from subscriptions for this object. We state the fact in the hope of drawing the attention of the liberally disposed to the wants and plans of the Society.

Unitarianism in India.—The following extracts from a letter addressed to a gentleman in Boston by the Rev. William Roberts, a Unitarian Missionary residing at Pursewaukum, Madras, gives us information respecting his charge in that place, and the prospects of Unitarianism in that part of India, which must be read with great interest.

* * * 'Our society at present consists of about twenty families and a few individuals. Our children are about fifty. Eight of

these families are up in different parts of the country ; the rest live dispersedly in Madras. Most of them are converts from Heathenism and Catholicism. They are all poor. Most of them are gentlemen's servants. Their earnings are barely enough to support their families. They had no other inducement but the conviction of the truth to declare for and profess Unitarianism openly. Some of them, in our first beginning, after having been convinced of their errors, actually took pains to learn to read on purpose that they might read the bible, or at least the fundamental parts of religion, with their own eyes, before they received baptism. Since they became Unitarians, they all have had their share of abuse and ill will from their relations, friends, and neighbours. Most of the men now can read. We teach our children, both male and female, to read and write. But owing to the poverty of the parents, the females are generally taken away from the schools when they can read the catechism and other small books. All the families and most of the individuals possess the Old and New Testaments and all the Unitarian tracts that I have got printed within the last four years. Formerly we had divine service once only on Sundays ; but now we have two services and I preach or explain some parts of scripture both times. * * *

‘ We have two schools ; one at Pursewaukum under my own roof, and now for eighteen months, with the assistance of the head scholar, under my own management ; and the other at Hanicollam, about three miles from Pursewaukum, under the management of Antony Maliapah. In both schools we have now in general about fifty scholars ; twelve boys and four girls of Unitarian parents ; the rest are of Catholic, Moor, and Heathen parents. Since our Pursewaukum charity begun, from the year 1810, besides Catholic and Heathen children of our own, more than twenty boys and girls have received their education and gone out of school. Most of our school books are of my composing. My views in them were to teach the doctrine of one God, the Messiahship of Jesus, good morals, and confutations of both heathen superstitions and trinitarian corruptions of Christianity. A few of these books are printed ; others are in cadjan leaves and copied as wanted.

‘ Since our existence became known to the respectable English Unitarians by my letters, though I have not been able to prevail with them to think upon sending a missionary to this country, they have been very kind. I have had from them abundance of excellent books and several remittances of money. After Master's death, in the year 1822, my situation was made known ; and by inquiry it was ascertained what will be sufficient for me to give up my time to the instruction of my brethren. They

have agreed, if their fund would allow, to allow me yearly £60 for my own support, and £40 for the expense of printing, schools, &c. They have remitted in the year 1823, £50; in the year 1824, £50; and in last year Rupees 857. I have had also at times when I was in need, from the Reverend W. Adam of Calcutta, 450 rupees. These sums, besides allowing for my support for the last three years, and paying the expenses of the schools, &c. enabled me in part to print some of my tracts. My printed tracts are eight in number and contain near five hundred pages. The Reverend W. Adam got seven of them for the Unitarian library at Calcutta. I have sent them also to England, but have not heard whether they have received them or not. I shall with much pleasure send you a set of them when I can find any body to take it from me to forward it to you. On 25th December, 1822, Mr Edward Poole of America, who first acquainted us with the conversion of the Reverend W. Adam and Rammohun Roy, visited us at Pursewaukum, stayed the whole time of divine service in the chapel, gave me fifty rupees to assist me in my printing, and took with him two copies of our liturgy, then just finished printing, another printed tract containing two sets of questions, &c. to Trinitarians, translated from the Christian Reformer. * * *

‘The printed tracts in our own language have confirmed my brethren in their faith, and furnished them with arguments against attacks of both Heathens and Trinitarians. I have given many of them freely to those of the Trinitarians and Heathens that wished to have them, and have sent many of them to different parts of the country. I have also sent some of them to some of those missionary gentlemen who understand our language. Some missionary gentlemen have sent for me and have spoken to me; but none of them have taken much trouble either to confute my doctrine, or to convince me of the truth of theirs by arguments. In general, after a single conversation, they endeavour to avoid my person.

‘Though our printed tracts are a great acquisition, and my time is fully employed to promote the truth to the best of my humble ability, yet the progress is very slow. Conversions are rare. Our tracts are chiefly in circulation among the poor. *

* * * More books in our own language, more teachers and a person or two of better abilities at the head of Unitarians, are necessary before any impression could be made upon many. That Unitarianism will triumph over the superstitions of my country I have no doubt. But the professors of it, and teachers, and books in abundance must increase. At present we are only keeping the truth alive and bearing our humble

testimony to it. My books are in my own language, Tamul. I have no ability to write and express the contents of them in English to the satisfaction of my respectable friends; and they, not knowing what these contain, I am afraid that I shall not be able to procure aid sufficient even to keep up our present establishment. My lot is cast in difficult times; may the will of our heavenly Father be done. * * *

'May 31st, 1826,—Pursewaukum, Madras.'

Ordinations.

On Wednesday, February 28, Rev. Caleb Stetson was ordained pastor of the First Congregational Church and Society in Medford. Rev. Mr Briggs, of Lexington, offered the Introductory Prayer, and read a portion of the Scriptures. Rev. Mr Francis, of Watertown, delivered the Sermon, from Romans, xiv, 17. Rev. Dr Lowell, made the Ordaining Prayer. Rev. Mr Ripley presented the Right Hand of Fellowship. Rev. Mr Ware, Jr, addressed the people, and Rev. Mr Whitman, of Waltham, offered the Concluding Prayer.

On Wednesday, March 28th, the Rev. Alonzo Hill, was ordained as colleague pastor with the Rev. Dr Bancroft, over the Second Congregational Society in Worcester. Introductory Prayer and Reading of the Scriptures by the Rev. Alexander Young, of Boston; Prayer by the Rev. Dr Harris, of Dorchester; Sermon by the Rev. Mr. Brazer, of Salem, from Col. i. 27; Ordaining Prayer by the Rev. Dr Kirkland; Charge by the Rev. Dr Bancroft; Fellowship of the Churches by the Rev. Mr Ripley, of Boston; Address to the Society by the Rev. Dr Thayer, of Lancaster; Concluding Prayer by the Rev. Mr Allen, of Bolton.

On Wednesday, April 11, Mr Charles Chauncy Sewall was ordained to the pastoral care of the First Unitarian Church in Danvers. Introductory prayer, by Rev. Mr Bartlett, of Marblehead; Selections from the Scriptures, by Rev. Mr Green, of Lynn; Sermon by Rev. Mr Lamson, of Dedham, from John, x, 36; Ordaining Prayer by Rev. Mr White, of Dedham; Charge by Rev. Dr Flint, of Salem; Right Hand of Fellowship, by Rev. Mr Upham, of Salem, and Concluding Prayer, by Rev. Mr Brazer, of Salem.
